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The betrayal of the Charter

Shirley Hazzard

EVAN LUARD

A History of the United Nations: Volume 1, The Years of Western Domination, 1945-1955
404pp, Macmillan, £25.
0 333 24389 7

Eugenio Montale characterized the public events of our era as "fit for history, unfit for memory". In this first volume of his *History of the United Nations*, Evan Luard confirms the notion with an analysis of the abstraction called "international affairs" that ignores history's sources in human responsibility. The method undermines not only a vital area where impersonality is incompatible with any approach to truth, but also necessarily reduces confidence in sections where the story seems more candidly presented.

Luard's volume, dealing with the years 1945-1955, is textbook, rather than historical narrative. The author reviews the UN's founding, and proceeds through chapters individually devoted to the international crises of the postwar decade, discussing the UN's performance in each case. He then touches on disarmament, the UN Secretariat, and UN membership disputes; and closes by summarizing the views developed throughout. The book's theme - conveyed in its subtitle, "The Years of Western Domination" - is a mighty one, still to be fully revealed and frankly examined.

Always within the convention of UN thought and expression, the successive chapters on Azerbaijan and the Levant, Greece, Indonesia, Korea, Palestine, Kashmir, and Guatemala are superior. Despite a battery of "conflict situations" and the occasional "hosted" conference, the text is less jargon-ridden than in most such studies; and the conclusions, in these instances, generally less indulgent.

Luard moves beyond the simplistic formula that UN failure is "all the fault of governments". At his best, in these chapters, he examines the influence of particular national policies, actions and errors on a larger outcome.

During the decade covered by Luard's book, and far beyond it, the "western domination" of the United Nations was overwhelmingly directed by the United States, abetted - eagerly, reluctantly, or apathetically - by America's European, hemispheric, and Asian allies and dependents. The general disposition of the American public and of US administrations, Democratic and Republican, towards the new UN was a confusion of self-conscious ascendancy, enthusiasm, sentimentality, cynicism, villainy, and ignorance: that is, of immaturity made dangerous by power. The almost unbounded power of the United States at the United Nations was in the first place financial, in a world-wide as well as a parochial budgetary sense; it was numerical, consistently commanding the majority in UN councils; it was psychological, in that the UN was sited in New York and cast in an American mould; and it was potentially moral - the United States then being regarded as the stable, prosperous, beneficent centre of democratic energies. Whatever the capacity of the Soviet Union to make a nuisance of itself in UN assemblies, the Russians held none of those cards. Little virtue was in any case expected from that quarter. The advantages and opportunities were almost exclusively American; and thus too the responsibility.

Luard repeatedly illustrates the deficiencies of UN thought and processes - the inordinate lack of reason, courage, imagination, and knowledge; the inability to weigh alternatives or compromise; the trivial level of negotiation in the wings, and the specious bombast on stage. He demolishes another UN platitude - that the UN is a place where "governments at least keep talking" - by reminding us that its "propaganda-laden, declamatory environment" has

provided a forum for rampant nationalism and Cold War ideologies; for freezing nations into proclaimed attitudes, or compelling them to take sides. (It should also be remembered that nations have negotiated for many centuries, and have even on occasions made peace: lack of the present version of a United Nations would not have precluded international contact, and would frequently have simplified it.) In few instances is Luard able to report that the UN "acted as it in other cases often failed to do". His tale is predominantly of negotiations that "never really reached the heart of the matter", or of "dismal failure", or of exorbitant lost chances, as in Palestine; and of outright inequity, as in UN complicity in the 1954 invasion of Guatemala. He concludes that the UN failed throughout the first decade in its root purpose of conciliation less from the overpowering nature of events or from innate limitations than from gratuitous inadequacies and self-inflicted wounds: "It failed in this purpose because it never even attempted to achieve it."

In all this Luard appears forthright. (Even attacks of endemic cynicism repeatedly cause him to appear on two sides of some issue which his own exposition has made clearly single.) He is evidently sincere, in these chapters, in wishing to determine the origins of UN performance and the manner in which these neutralized the organization's potentiality. Thus far, by United Nations standards, the book is lucid, useful, and enquiring.

By United Nations standards only, Luard's investigations fall within what Vico called *coscienza*, or matter informed by man's intimate knowledge of his kind. Any disagreement over them can be comfortably adduced and absorbed within the UN frame. They will cause none of that private anguish and public penetration through which men acquire self-knowledge and institutions are re-born. Few of the laymen who constitute the entire world beyond UN walls will read this volume before it joins its many blue-jacketed brethren decomposing on academic shelves. In reviving the ancient categories of sacred and profane history, UN chroniclers have clung exclusively to the sacred side; the institution they depict is drained, as often they themselves are, of any suggestion that human characteristics are at work there. Luard's book, scarcely less than the rest, recalls that

blood of Dorothea Brooks's Mr Casaubon which, when examined under a magnifying-glass, "was all semicolons and parentheses". This essential flaw has led Luard to shirk the central episode of his story.

The United Nations confraternity has notably exerted itself to evade public accountability: the UN barons - governmental, Secretariat, or satellite (an agglomeration now encompassing several hundred thousand persons and consuming many billions of dollars annually) shall be tried only by other barons. To date, this demand, backed by a huge, costly, and often unethical public relations apparatus, has been remarkably acceded to. An indifferent or complaisant press has done little to discover or convey the dimensions of UN infirmity; organized supporters have been predominantly content to buff the UN's public image; academe has solemnly pondered UN phantasms; proposals for reforms have been localized, and disregarded; most criticism has been discounted as politically impelled; publications on UN matters have been written by insiders and reviewed by associates; and a view has been nurtured, not remote from moral blackmail, that it would be indecent to subject the organization to adult standards. Like the funeral director in *The Loved One*, the UN is "kinda holy". Some of this is well intended, but it does nothing to arouse the public to the realities of an appalling institution, nor to prepare for reconstitution of the internationalist concept in an intelligible form. One of Luard's most interesting passages deals with ideas - unexamined or discarded - for a different realization of the United Nations. Elements of these might well now make part of a larger reconsideration.

The episode Luard is unable to confront is one in which the screen of UN abstraction fell away and actual beings became answerable for betrayals of public trust and private decency; and for annihilation at the organization itself of UN Charter principle and an inestimable power for good.

At the UN's founding, a strong effort - reflected in the Charter - was made to establish the UN Secretariat as a hair-shirt for governments: an independent international civil service, headed by a vigorous Secretary-General, which would impartially provide exposure and propose

correctives to maintain the precepts to which governments nominally subscribed at San Francisco. Above all, the cumulative value and standing of such a body would have engaged public opinion as a deterrent against incipient conflicts. The experience of the League of Nations had made clear that machinery of international conciliation would be little more than a hodgepodge of national interests - as embodied in the present United Nations - without some such central organism whose loyalties were consistently to the world's citizenry rather than to governmental caprice.

Luard stresses this original resolve, invoking the "awful warnings" of the League. He goes on, however, to relate - as it were, incidentally - that when the big powers at once sought to violate these Charter provisions by installing their own candidates in senior UN posts, the first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, having been "strictly enjoined to take no account of political factors in making such appointments", decided, however (as have all his successors) that discretion was here the better part of valour. We are thus weirdly encouraged to pass over Lie's instant and fatal destruction of this Charter imperative as a show of "discretion". Correspondingly, having emphasized that the UN Preparatory Commission "firmly turned down a proposal that the consent of an individual's government would be required before he was appointed to the Secretariat", a proposal that had been strongly supported by the Soviet Union, Luard barely mentions the decisive overthrow by the United States, of that fundamental safeguard as well.

The subjection of the United Nations Secretariat was thus assured at birth. A surreptitious understanding between Lie and the United States authorities that the international civil service should conform to American directives was sufficiently apparent by March 1947 to provoke a mass staff demonstration at Lake Success, near the Secretary-General. In 1949 Lie entered into a written secret agreement with the State Department whereby American incumbents, or applicants at the UN were "screened" without their UN vetting. From Luard we merely learn that "the State Department agreed to examine US records", with no indication of the clandestine and illicit nature of the transaction nor of its

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[illegible]

rather than seem cowardly. But perhaps acceptance of what we cannot alter is the braver course. As Aristotle puts it: "A man . . . is not brave . . . if knowing the magnitude of the danger, he faces it through passion - as the Celts take up their arms to go to meet the waves."

One might be forgiven for wishing that Shakespeare had expressed himself more clearly at this point - to the extent even of mentioning those darn Celts. No doubt the actor who played Marcellus failed to remember the speech because he could never understand it. And what is the contemporary actor to do to get the meaning across? One of the myths by which our classical theatre lives is that the true meaning of a play must be what comes across in performance, yet the experience of reading this edition is enough to convince one that the actor performing Hamlet can only put over a fraction of the significance of certain lines.

This is not to say that we are better off reading *Hamlet* in the study than seeing it on the stage. Many of the academic problems associated with *Hamlet* simply do not arise on stage. For instance, if you only ever saw decent productions of the play, you would never know that there is a "problem" as to why the king does not react in the dumb-show. One way or another, the problem is always solved before the audience ever gets to the theatre: the tension of waiting for the king to crack is the great source of the interest of the scene. Yet I must say I often wish people in the theatre were less prone to despise an academic or "literary" approach and that academics were slower to turn their backs on the actor whose job it is to communicate the maximum available meaning of a text which would certainly die if its audience were only to be drawn from the academic community.

When we read *Hamlet* in privacy we create every part out of a part of ourselves, like an only child playing with a Pollocks toy theatre. And in these private performances we can be much more magisterial than any director. We rush through the duller bits. We allow our favourite characters to repeat their lines as often as they

wish. We rant, whisper, salivate, weep, roar - we do all the things which we would criticize in performance. If we want, we may even interpolate into these performances a juicy bit from one of Jenkins's footnotes. The cuts we make are nobody's business.

But when we go to the theatre, the luxury of all these decisions is taken out of our hands. We will never begin to enjoy the performances unless we are prepared to accept: here is a Hamlet not played by me. Worse still, here is a Hamlet who has never heard of me. Perhaps, at a pinch, he may understand my indecisiveness, but can he get anywhere near my nobility of spirit? It is hard for the academically-minded to enjoy themselves at the theatre because they feel most acutely the gross intrusion of Other People into roles that they have always occupied. From the playroom and the toy theatre, they have climbed not tip-toe into those legendary attics, the Bodleian or the Folger, where they discover that they may always play undisturbed. It is a wonderful life as long as you don't like Other People. It is the business of scholarship to prove that Other People are wrong.

As to the theatrical dislike of emendation, we may be certain that its history is long. If the actor who played Marcellus had been asked to review this edition he would certainly have had a great deal to say in defence of the "Bad Quarto." Of course, he would have said, "Will was a genius - a genius, but he had simply no idea of how much an audience could take. We never understood all those soliloquies. Never! That's why I cut them down to size. The point of theatre, my boy, is bums on seats. Bums on seats. And by Jove when we toured with OI we had bums on seats wherever we went."

Although it would be rare today to hear an actor praised for not bellowing too much with the detailed meaning of a text, one has only to look back to a Tynan review of Olivier to find great acting analysed in precisely this way. Olivier's gift, according to Tynan, was for pointing up a few significant words and getting as quickly and subtly as possible through the intervening passages. Today, it is common for

critics to single out "intelligent" performances for a kind of rueful praise. The actor you will read, seemed to be explaining the text rather than acting it, and it is generally felt that explanation is an inappropriate activity in the theatre. If we are realistic we have to admit that between the scholar's ideal reading and the great performance there is a difference both of quantity and of kind. A great Hamlet on stage may well fail to put across the true meaning of the "To be" speech. His greatness will lie elsewhere. It will derive from a consistent impression he gives of a character's development, and from the success with which he embodies his individuality in the part. This is what scholarship might call an "accretion." Certainly it is rare to find in this edition any positive contribution made by an actor to the understanding of *Hamlet*. Theatre critics feature even less in the notes - a fact which does not surprise me, since theatre criticism in general has found it possible to rub along quite nicely with a bare minimum of original ideas.

But if our classical theatre is to improve, it is not to stagnate. It seems to me vital to abandon the notion that performance is everything and that scholarship is merely an accretion. There are directors who will make it their business to go through all the major scholarship on a play but most of them will take care to conceal their learning from the public. In the presentation of programmes, one very rarely feels that any weight has been given to the dramaturgical side of a production. Indeed there is no dramaturgy at the RSC and very little evidence of one at the National. Nobody likes to accept that an intelligent audience emerging from a play might have found the performance completely satisfactory but might still have questions about how certain decisions were reached, questions which can appropriately be answered through means of documentation.

The Arden edition makes no attempt to do a stage history of *Hamlet*, but it contains a wealth of fresh suggestions which will be of interest to any modern director. The personality of its editor is one which prefers,

wherever possible, to come to a firm conclusion on a much-debated point. Yet I do not find any of these interpretations dogmatic or restricting. They are based on a profound feeling for idiom, and we have to accept with *Hamlet* that a great proportion of its idiom has been lost or submerged. This is not something that the theatre audience wants to believe about Shakespeare: they demand immediate access via his works to the mystery of the universe, and they have been encouraged in the belief that this is possible by centuries of popular bardology. Not along ago, for instance, the National Theatre mounted a recital of the whole of Shakespeare's sonnets. I wrote something to the effect that it was impossible to understand the sonnets when delivered all in one go. This provoked a member of the audience into a great rage - she wrote complaining that if I did not understand them I should have read them first. Among the National audience during this recital there was a most powerful sense of this prevailing fiction: we were all supposed to be taking it all in, and at the end of it all we could be as pleased with ourselves as with the performance.

For a masterpiece to come alive for us, and for it to come alive continually, it must be made strange. This is the generally given and accepted notion of theatrical aestheticism. And one of the strangest approaches to a masterpiece is through an edifice of this kind. Reading it is like coming upon a familiar city from a completely new road and observing its buildings and surrounding hills, each of them well enough known, set out in a new relation altogether. It should not be depressing, it should be exhilarating to see how immense a labour it has been for Jenkins to give a satisfactory account of the play. It means that this masterpiece has retained its capacity to recede, to breathe, to protect itself from our grosser intrusions.

I wish I knew something about *Hamlet* that Jenkins does not know. Instead I have been lent the following observation by Dr Anno Pasternak-Slater. For II.2.573 ("But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall") we are told that

"the pigeon was a symbol of meanness being popularly believed to have a gall which was notoriously the wrong within the liver of bitter and ravenous feelings." If this popular belief was error, it seems odd that the current edition of *Larousse Gastronomique* repeats it, saying that unlike other birds the pigeon has no gall, and that it is therefore common for the bird to be cooked with its liver inside.

My last point I hardly dare mention, but since Jenkins tells us that Ophelia's distribution of flowers still seems satisfactory elucidation I thought I might throw it in. The question is to whom does Ophelia give the flowers? That fennel is for Hamlet? "Abundantly attested," the edition says. Florio's *A World of Words* says that *dare fennecio* means "to give fennel, to claw, to clog, to clog, to flatter to dissemble." The source of the meaning, as I understand it, is an old custom of Florentine wine merchants who gave *fennecio* (fennel seed) to their customers to the knowledge that if the first eat fennel it will make an indigestible wine taste good. As a derivative from deception, the word came to mean homosexual. Perhaps Florio was too nice to mention this.

Anyway, my point is simply that in a modern Italian production Ophelia could not possibly give fennel to the Queen, as Professor Jenkins thinks she should. The only candidate for the accusation is Laertes. Laertes is in love with Hamlet, which is why he tells Ophelia not to mock around with the Prince. Hamlet has turned him down, which is why Laertes wants to go away to Paris. Polonius suspects that Ophelia knows, which is why he is reluctant to let the boy out of his sight and why he has spied on him. He is to tell the baffled Reynaldo what is in his mind, but he cannot frame a word.

And then, air, does a this - a do-what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something. Where did I leave?

But there I must leave the matter, for the worst has already come to the worst. We have hit upon an interpretation which could kill the play off for ever.

We have it of good authority that anatomy is destiny, and here is Charles Darwin being examined by the captain of HMS Beagle, and looked at through the "physiognomical" system of the eighteenth-century Swiss pastor, Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801). Darwin's nose became the founding organ of evolutionary theory, a prophetic item of anatomy that permitted its owner to enter the world of natural history and materialist biology. If Fitzroy had seen a shorter nose, or a bent nose, or *an Origin of Species*. Instead, maimed, *de la Sierne*, with a cow unsatisfactory organ, Darwin might have crept back to his father, apologized, and then carried his nose with him and become his failed person-naturalist, buried in Shropshire or Devon, from whom no one heard again.

Physiognomy, the science of bodily expression and especially the face was certainly older than the eighteenth century, and certainly to do with more than the nose. But noses matter. They have always figured in anatomical science and aesthetics, and the interest in the physiognomists of the eighteenth century lies not in their discovery of a new natural object, but in the constructions they placed upon it. In the exotic, literary uses of anatomical facts, the nose and its fortunes are placed at the mercy of Eros. For Sierne, the founding father of the absurd, noses share in the generalized sexual disaster of his characters. They leave their classical, static place on the aquiline visage of authority, and become the pathetic signifiers of classical dogma. This nose, as part of the anatomical domain; by the end of the Enlightenment through Sierne and then into the Russians, such as Gogol, it became the index of sexual (and political) force. It is even possible to trace the history of the nose as the homopolis organ of personal disaster into the history of psychoanalysis. Freud's one-time confidant Wilhelm Fliess was much concerned with the nose, its place as the penis of the face, indeed as an advertisement, through contour and size, for the twinned organ lurking below. The history of Sierne's "cock and bull" stories reaches, as it should, into the idea of early psychoanalytic theory. The nose is luminous, as Edward Lear divined, and luminous with anatomical clues or marks of farcical disaster.

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the results of astrological influence, but could also be compared to animal faces, with the usual rather unilluminating results. Tytler traces these various strands clearly, and in detail, noticing that physiognomy was not always linked to aesthetics (it could be seen as a piece of charity, and avoided, as with Leonardo). He argues however, that in the eighteenth century, the growth of aesthetic theory also accompanies a growth of physiognomical theory, preparing the background to Lavater's own system. This seems a little uncertain, and initiates a tone in the book - the anxious hunting for "physiognomy" at all points of the compass - that obscures certain issues.

Clearly, writers like Shaftesbury, Lessing, Schiller and Winckelmann were concerned with beauty, and with faces. But they were not necessarily concerned with physiognomy as a special subject in itself. To be something distinct, something

As with Anton Mesmer, it was part of the status of Lavater's "science" that he himself should have had considerable personal presence. Presumably he could stare, and stare well. The history of staring has yet to be written, but famous examples of staring occur, say, in the history of psychiatry: Francis Willis, one of George III's mad-doctors, would stare at the king, and so the idea went, frighten him back from the abyss. Lavater would stare at the outer body, to find the soul within. And people, many of them aristocrats, would visit Switzerland to be stared at by this pastor. Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente* (1775 onwards), his main work on physiognomy, was widely read, and in England drew the attention of Fuseli, Thomas Holcroft and Mary Wollstonecraft, and led to the famous English translation of Henry Hunter in the 1780s.

What of the readings of the faces themselves? Tytler unhappily draws

Separating out physiognomy from aesthetics, and from cerebral anatomy is one of the difficulties that a historian faces, Tytler included. He attempts to advance the arguments for the nineteenth century by associating physiognomy with phrenology, or the reading of skull contours as an index of character. This is a slippery thing to attempt, and he is not successful. As Tytler himself says, Franz Joseph Gall, the founder of phrenology, dissociated it from physiognomy, and phrenology certainly claimed to have "gone further" - in Foucault's sense to have "gone into" the subject through the brain - than physiognomy had done. At times the two subjects must necessarily have been close. But Tytler isn't always right in his account of physiognomy's relation to phrenology.

In terms of literary influence-hunting, however, he does a thorough job. He shows much eighteenth-century concern with facial clues to

But the thesis has become too generalized to make its points: physiognomy is not the same thing as "characterization". Judith Wechsler almost admits as much in her elegantly written *A Human Comedy*, which concerns itself with nineteenth-century Paris and with its self-representation, through journalism, popular theatre and caricature. For all the reference made to Le Brun, Le Brun and Balzac, Wechsler brings to life the Balzacian caricature as an independent form, a geography of the city and its bodies, and then extends her view into mime and theatre. It is an excellent subject, and the book is full of fine illustrations of newspaper caricature and satirical prints. The connection to the details of physiognomical science still seems weak, as if satirical art were perfectly capable of developing its own taxonomy, based on realism and invention. When Wechsler quotes Daumier's description of a banker (large, bulky, selfish) and then quotes Lavater on "a type to be avoided" (large, small eyes, puffed up lips) it doesn't seem a real connection. The "science" of physiognomy might be strangely irrelevant to the rich business of portraying social forms, from direct daily observation.

Richard Sennett, in his foreword to *A Human Comedy*, says that despite his great debts to Lavater and his life-long fascination with "the characters of Paris", Balzac is Balzac because his descriptions so far transcend the language of classification. "Judith Wechsler conveys this exactly, by careful study of individual work. When looking at Grandville (1803-1846), she knows just how far a private vision could take one particular social observer, away from Enlightenment obsessions with classification, and into an anthropomorphic surrealism of startling originality. After all, Daumier, Monnier and the others were delivered into a paradox of city life: that it has no easy natural history, no settled round of events, and can only be caught in private ways, on the run. A world of glimpses, of backward glances, fierce and ephemeral. No doubt, the caricaturists had to appeal to ideas of type, as Balzac appealed in his novels. But the interest lies in the individual use and form of the type, not in the idea of typing. In order to convey the moments of the city world, caricaturists could be said to use the "science" of expression or physique as aids: they were not ends in themselves, the static resting-points of Lavaterian science. City life and its recording in the novel, in the sense, be irreversibly postponed, and not just "moral" as the eighteenth century used that word. Because of the work of Walter Benjamin, much is made when talking of nineteenth-century Paris or the silent observer, or the strolling, solitary spectator. It is likely that such silent observation will finally lead to private forms, perhaps journeying through physiognomy and type-theory first. Wechsler quotes the naturalist Buffon as one possible influence on ideas of "the observer", along with Gall, Lavater and Cuvier. This is an interesting idea, but prompts the remark that Buffon did not believe in types at all - or at least only in very limited ways - and was an opponent of strict taxonomies. Darwin, likewise, found taxonomies of insanity unilluminating. Balzac may be an exception, but the other subjects of this fine study all seem to provide their own classifications in the end, and to defeat the diffusion of an accepted taxonomy whereby a city could interpret itself to its citizens. These are quite different from using a type (Lavaterian for any other) inherited system, and to vindicate the artistic need for private vision.

The arts of recognition - or non-recognition - concern both these books, which contribute handsomely to the history of that mysterious business, Sciences of the face, political art, classification or confusion? While both authors suggest, albeit inadvertently, that on the one hand, the face and characters may be too strange to quantify, they also lead one to ponder further Oscar Wilde's remark, that only superficial people fail to judge by appearance.

The workshop of T. J. Wise

Arthur Freeman

In 1956 (*The Times*, October 18, "Forgery and Theft", and *TLS*, October 19, "Aloofness Skelton in Thomas J. Wise's Cupboard" by D. F. Foxon) the relatively good world of rare books was shocked by a new tale of old theft - a history, fifty years on, of the mutilation, substitution, sophistication and resale of early English printed plays belonging to the British Museum. The magnificent "Ashley Library" of Thomas J. Wise (1859-1937), acquired by the Museum in 1937, was especially attractive in that "many of the Museum's rare Elizabethan first editions, copies of which, Wise possessed in superb condition, were very much the worse for wear" (W. Partridge, *Thomas J. Wise in the Original Cloth*, 1946, p.301). In fact it proved to contain, literally, the reasons for some of the canonical imperfections in the Museum's own collection. Altogether 206 single leaves of forty pre-Restoration quarto plays in the Museum, nearly all of them David Garrick's own copies, bequeathed by him, were missing from the bound volumes on the shelves. Eighty-eight of these leaves, identified by various tests, were found to be bound up in the Wise copies now acquired by the nation, where there might otherwise have been the gaps due to defective originals. One more was discovered loosely inserted into one of the Ashley quartos, apparently for comparison with nearly already present, or in preparation for an intended substitution.

Subsequent investigation showed even greater depths of depravity to the collector's behaviour. By 1961 (see D. F. Foxon, *Thomas J. Wise and the Pre-Restoration Drama*, 1959, and Foxon and W. B. Todd, *Thomas J. Wise - A Supplement*, 1961) eighty-one more of the missing leaves had been located in two collections "serviced" by Wise early in this century. John Henry Wrenn's, now at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas, Austin, had ac-

quired less than seventy-five of them, and George A. Aitken's, also at Texas, another six, two of them loose and separate. Of the original 206, then, 170 had been discovered in three private collections; and thirty-six were thus declared "still untraced". Not one stolen or sequestered leaf has, until now, been voluntarily returned to the British Museum/British Library.

What Wise had done, evidently, was to supply omissions, or replace "loftier" leaves in his own copies with better ones from the Museum's, and perhaps later, to take out defective copies of other quartos bought at auction or from booksellers with leaves from the same public sources (the activity seems datable: c. 1911-1906). In doing so he destroyed evidence of original issue, integrity of issue and date, and old provenance, with a wanton and even vicious disregard for the physical book, the object to which he had ostensibly devoted his scholarly and collecting career. Nor did his voracity stop with institutional degradation: he pilaged the copies sent to him in trust by Wrenn, for reprinting, taking superior leaves for his own collection and replacing them with the rejects from his copies. On at least one occasion Wise unwittingly destroyed the only known first-state example of a rare book, Jonson, Marston and Chapman's *Eastward Ho*, first edition, 1605. In order to improve its appearance, keeping the degraded new consigned, and into the bargain defrauding Wrenn again, he systematically dismembered or debased were, on the whole, of the most common breed of valuable book, those, commercially viable but frequently marked, the very sort of "rare" text least obviously traceable in future transactions. For a while his motive may have been solely that of enhancing his own collection; but it was the grim business of making

money from his workshop and his dupes. To 1956 even those who continued to regard Wise's forgeries of nineteenth-century literary pamphlets as a kind of gentleman's hoax, aimed at foolish collectors who deserved to be fleeced, had at last to despair of him.

A year ago Bernard Quaritch Ltd acquired a specified portion of the antiquarian stock of Pickering and Chatto Ltd, as it stood before the recent transfer of ownership. This portion included all printed books and manuscripts before 1660, and all technically "imperfect" books - a special part of the basement stock numbering perhaps 3,000 volumes or fragments of volumes, mostly of before 1700. Including Quaritch have for a long time maintained such "hospitality" with the intended purpose of mending or "perfecting" defective copies of the same work that might be purchased later, or as the proportion should vary, of making up a copy already held by the wreckage of another. New bibliographical scepticism and new tradition have gone against this piecework (for the most part), and Pickering's "hospitality" must have been one of the last word to survive. Quaritch set about cataloguing it in the full light of its imperfection.

The section of defective or "odd" stock which first tempted examination was that of pre-Restoration drama. In English - chiefly individual quarto plays reprinted before 1660, of which there were three hundred examples; a "reasonable" quantity. After sorting and cataloguing, the plays were identified and catalogued, but a batch of loose, individual leaves, not part of any quarto, survived, now battered or damaged, survived from the mass. The leaves numbered 102, and we compared them, with the bookseller's eye, to the list of titles in the British Library copies catalogued by Foxon.

The results were startling, but not

unexpected. Of 102 Pickering/Quaritch leaves, eighty-two relate immediately to the known thefts from British Museum quartos, four of them being certainly the original Garrick leaves torn or razored from volumes on the North Library shelves. At least four more, and possibly seven, are the original leaves from Wise/Ashley copies, which have been replaced by stolen Museum leaves. The remainder consist, precisely with the original thefts, these no doubt will marry up with "original" quartos in the Wrenn and Aitken collections, or elsewhere, but careful scrutiny of many doctored copies descending from Wise will need to be undertaken.

Statistics first: twenty plays are represented to the Pickering stock by the eighty-two loose leaves. Sixteen of the leaves are all those specifically reported missing from the Museum copies of seven of these plays. Sixty-five are the majority of ninety-eight leaves missing from the thirteen other plays. In the Museum's collection. There is just one leaf which does not correspond to a Museum mutilation, but is, it seems, from another "contributory" source. Of these eighty-two leaves, four are from the original Garrick copies (F3 from Thomas Nabbes, *The Bride*, 1640; B4 *Cruelty*, 1640; and B4 from James Shirley, *Loves Labour's Lost*, 1633); three are the originals from Ashley copies (B4, and 12 from George Chapman, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, 1625; and 11 from John Ford, *The Broken Heart*, 1640); and four more are from Ashley's quartos of Davenant's seventeenth plays. Contemplating the shaved or holed or wormed or simply untraceable, one must imagine Wise at his desk with piles of *disiecta membra*, combinations until each finally made up copy of a quarto was the best he could manage. Perhaps the four left

over stolen Garrick leaves which survive here were after all the "wreck" of a pecking order of substitutes.

Eighty years after his flourishing we have come upon the remains of what the workshop. These (at least) eighty-two leaves are what is left of a practical factory for reconstituting any dramatic quartos, for purposes of sale and gratification, and for personal profit at permanent loss to a book collector. They are melancholy reminders to the text collector that repairs can be offered, they are going back.

Why did Wise keep them? There is reason to think that he hoarded the most damning scraps of correspondence and print regarding forgeries and retail transactions. He was headless of ultimate risk. Like any criminals, before ever purloining, the plain avoidance of his guilt, the unlikely contingency of future use, but the survival of these leaves, in the Pickering and Chatto stock, is a simple explanation, and one is thankful for it. In July, 1939, at an auction sale of household effects in Hampstead, less than the property of the widow of T. J. Wise, lot 173 contained "a parcel of 17th and 18th century plays; purchased by John Dryden and others". It was purchased for £1.15s (no great sum, but great value and no real bargain). Pickering and Chatto, and even more, remained - at least in large part - their stock ever afterwards. Now these leaves are being presented again by Quaritch, through the Friends of the National Libraries, and they will be retained in a discrete group - not for the most part important even to the students of the originals, but to the students of malfeasance and its detection. Future scholars, whether of the Restoration drama or of T. J. Wise and his diabolical rare-book-trade of his time and making, will find them there as a single package - unless someone picks them.

The construing of the face

Michael Neve

GRAEME TYTLER
Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes
436pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £20.20.
0 691 06491 1

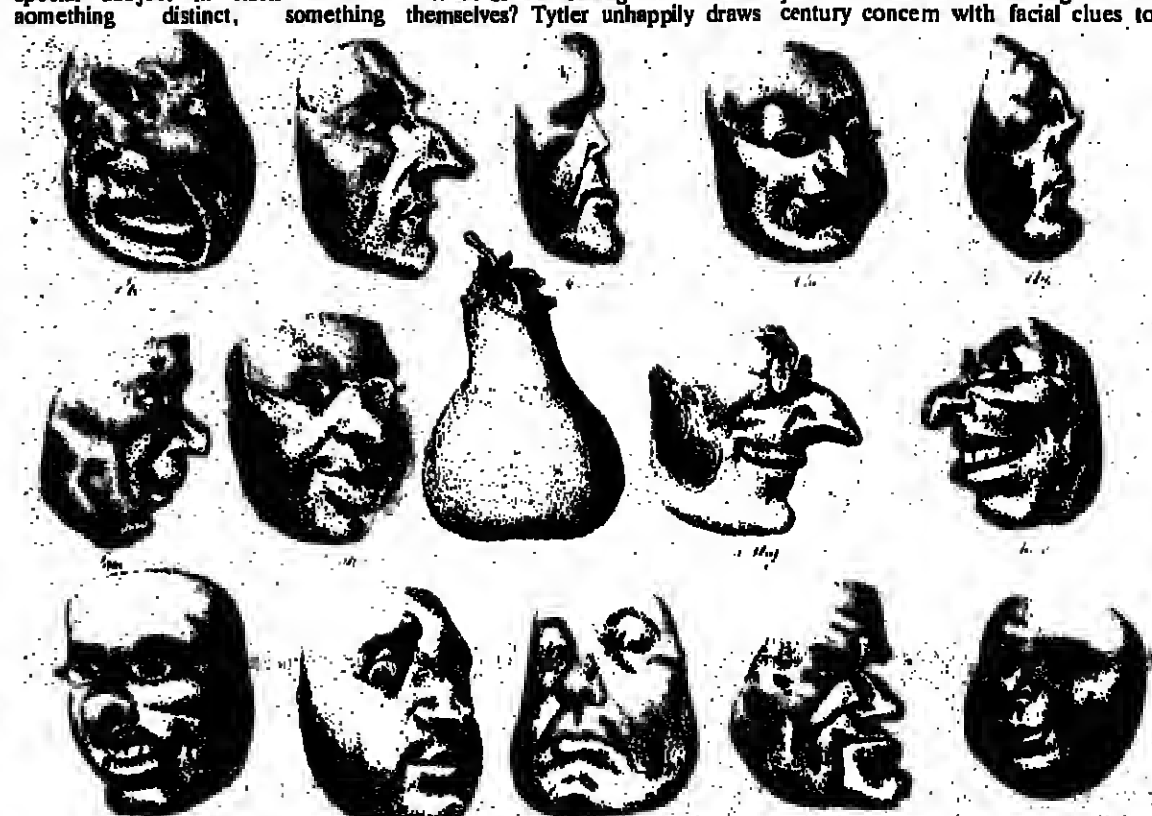
JUDITH WECHSLER
A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris
208pp, with 161 black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £18.50.
0 500 01268 7

Afterwards, on becoming very intimate with Robert Fitzroy, I heard that I had run a very narrow risk of being rejected on account of the shape of my nose! He was an ardent disciple of Lavater, and was convinced that he could judge of a man's character by the outlines of his features, and he doubted whether anyone with my nose could possess sufficient energy and determination for the voyage.

We have it of good authority that anatomy is destiny, and here is Charles Darwin being examined by the captain of HMS Beagle, and looked at through the "physiognomical" system of the eighteenth-century Swiss pastor, Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801). Darwin's nose became the founding organ of evolutionary theory, a prophetic item of anatomy that permitted its owner to enter the world of natural history and materialist biology. If Fitzroy had seen a shorter nose, or a bent nose, or *an Origin of Species*. Instead, maimed, *de la Sierne*, with a cow unsatisfactory organ, Darwin might have crept back to his father, apologized, and then carried his nose with him and become his failed person-naturalist, buried in Shropshire or Devon, from whom no one heard again.

Physiognomy, the science of bodily expression and especially the face was certainly older than the eighteenth century, and certainly to do with more than the nose. But noses matter. They have always figured in anatomical science and aesthetics, and the interest in the physiognomists of the eighteenth century lies not in their discovery of a new natural object, but in the constructions they placed upon it. In the exotic, literary uses of anatomical facts, the nose and its fortunes are placed at the mercy of Eros. For Sierne, the founding father of the absurd, noses share in the generalized sexual disaster of his characters. They leave their classical, static place on the aquiline visage of authority, and become the pathetic signifiers of classical dogma. This nose, as part of the anatomical domain; by the end of the Enlightenment through Sierne and then into the Russians, such as Gogol, it became the index of sexual (and political) force. It is even possible to trace the history of the nose as the homopolis organ of personal disaster into the history of psychoanalysis. Freud's one-time confidant Wilhelm Fliess was much concerned with the nose, its place as the penis of the face, indeed as an advertisement, through contour and size, for the twinned organ lurking below. The history of Sierne's "cock and bull" stories reaches, as it should, into the idea of early psychoanalytic theory. The nose is luminous, as Edward Lear divined, and luminous with anatomical clues or marks of farcical disaster.

But noses are not the whole story, as Graeme Tytler shows in his *Physiognomy in the European Novel*. To the classical era, with the work of Pythagoras and more importantly, Aristotle's *Physiognomonica*, the nose takes its place as one part of facial identity. Physiognomy was not self-sufficient for the Ancients, nor indeed for Renaissance writers, when the marks of the face were determined by celestial influence, and physiognomy was annexed to astrology. The central text here was the Italian Giambattista Della Porta's *De humana physiognomonia* of 1586. Passes carried



"Masks of 1831" drawn by Honoré Daumier (1808-79) and published in 1832, reproduced from *A Human Comedy* by Judith Wechsler, reviewed on this page. The caricature of Napoleon is by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1855). The king himself is here depicted, in the centre, as a pear, the device invented by Charles Philippon (1800-1862), the founder and editor of *Le Charivari* in 1830 and *Le Charivari* in 1832. Also widely and wittily caricatured in the group above are Charles-Guillaume Etienne (1777-1843), the newspaper editor and playwright, and François Guizot (1788-1874), the historian and statesman, as the first two in the top row; another political journalist and politician, Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), in the second row; Charles, Comte de Lameth (1757-1832), the general and politician, and André Dupin (1783-1865), the lawyer also active in politics; to the right of Le Rol Bourgeois on forme de poire are his chief censor, the Comte d'Argout, the Minister of Commerce, Public Works, Fine Arts and the Interior, and the Duc de Kertry. In the bottom row two Marshals: the first face being that of Georges Mouton, Comte de Lobau (1770-1838), and the fourth Nicolas-Jean de Diez Soult (1769-1851), Napoleon's sometime Marshal of the Empire.

"scientific" physiognomy had to find systematic expression, that made stronger claims than aesthetic and aesthetic theory. While confusing these categories at certain moments, Tytler shows excellently how Lavater did this, and makes a fine contribution to eighteenth-century science studies in doing it.

He portrays Lavater as a theologian of the face, an author who carried a Swiss platism into a science of expression and who as a result gained an extraordinary reputation throughout literature Europe. "For Lavater," writes Tytler, "the human body was not merely a temporary earthly frame for the spirit, to be discarded after death, but a form capable of regeneration and endless transformation in the next life, according to the spiritual character and moral development of its owner." The interesting point here is that Lavater had been very impressed by the embryological thinking of Charles Bonnet, a leading pre-formationist with mystical leanings. Pre-formationist emphasis lay on the body containing a germ which was the essence of the human being, giving shape to the body in life and to the body after life. The study of the face was, as it were, a moment in this great transition, a science of the future as well as the present. Tytler tells all this very well, and connects the ideas of physiognomy to the life sciences, in an important

back from any discussion of what was the Lavaterian project was put into the late eighteenth century. The theological dimension of good looks is well described, but surely more needs to be said. The history of sexual selection is usually discussed around Darwin's *Descent of Man* of 1871, but its actual practice, along with theoretical guides, is far older. Lavater was certainly pondering to the pretty people of the Enlightenment in his system, keeping the standard classical values - full forehead, aquiline nose - and adding his "moral insights".

As many authors have commented, some of these were bizarre. Diderot, superbly displayed in Robert Darnton's recent study *The Business of Enlightenment* as a tireless impresario of the great *Encyclopédie*, was described by Lavater as "unenterprising". Goethe, ascribed perfect moral looks, came to see him as vain and superstitious. Napoleon dismissed Lavater as "cet insigne charlatan", and in the nineteenth century, George Eliot complained of "Lavater's queer sketches of physiognomy, and still queerer judgments on them". Lavater was engaged in displaying a fantasy of pure good looks, one might say - and in historical terms, was a momentary influence and not the founder of great tradition. It is even possible that Lavater thought those most perfect who looked most like himself.

moral characteristics, long pre-dating Lavater, and it appears again that Lavater heightened claims for a science of expression, rather than inflicting one. After all, it would be an absurd claim that somehow Lavater's invented characterization (indeed his system may subtly undermine characterization, by annexing it to a prescribed number of moral possibilities, in the way that naturalists such as Linnaeus were tidying up species of flora and fauna.) It certainly seems (and Tytler finds exhaustive evidence for it) that extensive characterization is a feature of the European nineteenth-century novel; it is a murky question how Lavaterian this is. Some wide reading in obscure novels of the time has been done here, and supports what must be Tytler's main purpose, to show how physical description matters in nineteenth-century novels. But (to take one small example), how is Stendhal's "man whom no novelist could have been more faithful disciple of Lavater" earning such a description when he characterizes the Marquis de Mole as having "une tournure assez mesquine"? The evidence for real connections to physiognomy seems buried, and much of the latter part of *Physiognomy in the European Novel* is hard work. Not that the researches behind the chapters are devoid of interest or insights: it is useful to have a catalogue of what half colours do to their owners in novels of the time.

Ugliest is best

Adam Mars-Jones

JOHN GREGORY DUNNE

Dutch Shea, Jr.
352pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£7.50.
0 297 78164 2

Dutch Shea, Jr. is a cynical novel, and not only because Dutch himself is, as he tells us, a "terminal cynic". Dutch Senior killed himself in prison while doing time for embezzlement. This may have damaged Dutch Junior's prospects as a lawyer, but it also set him an example. He follows it by dipping into an estate of which he is custodian. He is separated from his wife, and his daughter was blown up by the IRA while on a visit to Britain. He lives in conditions of such self-imposed squalor that an angry burglar complains about the low quality of his possessions ("I been in jails turn this shit down"). The members of the Dutch Shea, Junior, Appreciation Society are exclusively pimps and mafiosi, whom he has somehow got into the habit of defending.

Corruption in this novel is more than a theme; it is something of an obsession, almost an infatuation. Dutch's corrupt father turns up again, in a more advanced state of corruption, when prolonged rain causes a mudslide in Goldman and Flowers Memorial Park. There is much mutilation and decay, plentiful autopsies and accidents, and though the life of a pimp lawyer is unlikely to be savoury in all its details, the glee behind the disgust becomes disturbing.

Even when there is no obvious occasion for revulsion, no severed nipple, no shredded baby, Dunne finds ways of letting the corruptible body know just what he thinks of it. It excretes, therefore it is. It bleeds, it farts, it develops blackheads. At funerals it sneezes, spraying the flag with mucus. It has cellulite deposits on its thighs. It uses Compazine suppositories and Septre DS for cystitis and Hydro-Diluti for premenstrual symptoms and Natrexin-K for bloating.

The reader must be quite an aficionado of mucus properly to enjoy this book. Even when there is discharge, plenty on the level of action, the book further insists upon it. A urologist (referred to as a "becker") reassures a patient about his fertility: "A bazooka it's not. But you're not shooting blanks either." Dutch Shea, Jr., contemplates a client: "A mountain range of eruptions and oozing caruncles. Wonderful word, eruncule. One of the best. Next to smegma, the ugliest in the language. Smegma has caruncle bent by a car length. The conflation of best and ugliest is instructive. But is this agonized suppurating Catholicism, as advertised, or different? Does this book represent a tortured view of human existence, or merely a canny view of bookbuying America?"

Through the peep-hole

Laura Marcus

SONIA PILGER

Malden Rites: A Romance
278pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£7.95.
0 297 78165 0

"How nice to be able to say 'I've made love and sleep!'" the hero of Martin Amis's *The Rachel Papers* remarks, before embarking on a description of a particularly grueling bout of sexual activity. "Only it wasn't like that; it didn't happen that way." Given the state of recent novels in which truth-telling is invariably telling the truth of sex, the reader may well be led to feel a similar nostalgia for the discreet blases of former fictions.

Sonia Pilger has indeed been described as "women's answer to Martin Amis", the narrator of *Malden Rites*, Hannah Wolfe, is like Amis's Charles Hayward: knowing, literary and much preoccupied with the gaining

Only in one area does the disgust let up.
Cat.

Cat is the daughter killed by the IRA (severed head in a bowl of lemon sorbet, right arm on the hommet of a Bentley), and she often gets a paragraph to herself. When Cat died, Dutch stopped eating. He let things slide. He started using the short sentence. All the time.

Because Cat was different. She called butterflies "flybutters". She wrote her first poem at the age of seven. She called fear and death and the unknown The Broken Man (perhaps she had read an early manuscript of *The World According to Garp*, in which a precocious child calls the same dark forces The Under Toad).

Cat, in other words, is cute, and as a focus of values in the novel she is a disaster. There must be better ways of loading a dice than applying smegma to five of its faces, and sugar to the sixth. To make his mixture of disgust and sentiment plausible, if not palatable, Dunne employs a single device: the self-lacerating wisecrack. Cat was eighteen when she died. Volvo dealers claim their car has a life expectancy of 17.9 years. So: "Who would have thought she had the life expectancy of a Volvo?" This phrase is repeated three times in two pages. You see? He feels so deeply that he must pretend to feel nothing. His, you understand, is a tragic coarseness. The book also contains a disgusting stand-up comic, Jackie Cross, intended to make Dutch seem fastidious. But every character has alloted one-liners to deliver, in the same street-wise rhythm.

The book has plenty of plot, most of it concerning the parentage of Cat, whom the Sheas adopted. As the action proceeds, Dutch makes stylized announcements about his life ("I have spent my lifetime trying not to know"). My life is a Chinese box of uninvestigated mysteries" like a bagged, boiled inner-city Oedipus; but there is no feeling of discovery or development. The cheaply ironical tone remains constant through all the legal jargon, the medical details, the lists of brand names and the never-ending wisecracks.

Once or twice, Dunne achieves an effect of some earnestness and power. One of Dutch's clients, for example, admits that he has strangled a pair of hamsters because they were "hassling" him. Perhaps it's just the refreshing change after so much hollow human horror, but those extinguished rodents are the most affecting thing in the book.

Dutch Shea, Jr. pretends to analyse corruption, political, social and moral, but his real ambitions are much humbler. Ignore the epigraphs from Hopkins and Wmugh. John Gregory Dunne isn't exposing the spiritual emptiness of modern life, he isn't even struggling the hamsters that hassle him (twice), or, different? Does this book represent a tortured view of human existence, or merely a canny view of bookbuying America?

Kind-of-blank jag

Galen Strawson

LAUREL GOLDMAN

Saunders the Territory
307pp. Faber. £7.95.
0 571 11962 X

A deranged hero: it's one of the easiest ways of manufacturing fiction, and one of the hardest ways of doing it well. Mental disorder is an evocative topic for phrase-makers short on story who want to be novelists: if there's no real development — well, that's in the nature of a chaotic life; if no clear character emerges — well, that's in the nature of the illness. It provides stylish cover for the grossest sentimentality. And it's extremely economical: all the disparate bits and pieces in one's notebooks — random scenarios, excursions into fantasy, snappy, loopy exchanges — can be fitted into the story without doing too much violence to the reality principle, because part of the fictional reality is that the hero's own reality principle is askew.

The temptations of the genre are considerable. In *Saunders the Territory* it seems that Laurel Goldman has succumbed to them in the most dismal way. What she has in fact are a couple of dozen pleasing phrases. What she has made from them is a work of over 300 pages. There are no characters to speak of, only a few personae, or styles of mental illness, and some female bodies that speak. There is no story to speak of, only a collection of episodes arranged in temporal sequence, crippled by integrated flashback and mismanaged, implausible epistolary asides. There is no art in the book — no construction, no development. Nothing is shaped or stretched or put to the test; no insight is delivered. Perhaps the only thing that is effectively invoked, very much en passant, is the misery and anxiety of Jay Davidson's childhood.

Jay, alias Jesse James — his nom de guerre, as it were — starts out in Bellevue hospital. He can't handle people or jobs, he's kind of blank; he has parent trouble and a "personality disorder". He takes a part in Ward Government and Mass Activity, he belongs to the Leisure Group, he goes to Daily Living and Psychodrama, and helps to "do" Evening Nourishments — along with Shipwreck, the Princess and Veronica Lal and a lot of others with more ordinary names: Willy, who's always blushing; Paye, vicious, perceptive and four-mouthed; Franklyn, whose echolalia, schizophrone malapropisms are always obliquely a propos (he requests the pressure of your company, Hamilton, given to old-fashioned courtesy and diction, who delivers a series of increasingly dilatory diatribes when elected to the presidency of Ward Government; and Silas who struggles to maintain contact with reality, but who wakes one morning with all the lines on his face vanished away, collapsed into his private mental devices.

In *Victims of Love*, Paul Sutcliffe is a full-time New York lecturer in English and a part-time novelist; his wife, Linda, is a full-time children's editor and a part-time parent. Paul, of course, is also a parent and recognizes the fact. With his liberal, permissive approach to human relations (he has two lovers), he is very good at mopping up the tears and generally pouring oil on the troubled waters caused, in his view

Tha genre is familiar, but some of the hospital episodes have a certain flair. Best are the patients' conversations, with their startling indirections, relevant-on-the-rebound, charmed and barbed. But the whole thing seems dependent on Lego psychology and a straining imagination that refuses to chinge down. Goldman's view of mental illness is in constant danger of sentimental, romanticizing relapse into melodrama and neat short sentences. Jay, fantasizing role-reversals with the hospital staff, pursues a vague, mungic project of data collection, trying to put the pieces together and make sense of the world. In flashback he goes through set-piece hysterical episodes (sleeping jag, paralysis jag, eating jag, distorted vision jag, feeling-cold-in-high-summer jag) as if they were course credits, and engages in mawkish sex — the "Do it. Do it... sha lifts me hard to her... I feel it all wet and juicy" sort. "Umgh", says adolescent Jay, and "Oooh", masturbator as he talks dirty to his girlfriend on the telephone.

He drifts towards viability — no sense of this process is conveyed — and is discharged from Bellevue. Moving back to his New York flat, he finds it has been let to Carrie and Nora, aspiring actress and publisher's assistant respectively. They all move in together. Jay desires Nora, Carrie

desires Jay. Green-eyed Nora is out, Carrie and Jay set up house. Jay starts sleeping with Nora on the side. But Boredom soon permeates personified and male; dogs him in his shoulder; sleeps with Delusinius flourish — ballooning, collapsing flat. Silas turns up on a trip, Hamilton is in on it, decides — in so far as he is capable — to go.

All set for apothecosis on the

West bus to Los Angeles, Jay

apparently becomes

psychotic: major hallucinations

But it's hard to know how to take

is he meant to be really mad, or

just half asleep? — since

hallucinations are only there

flashback-like fictional devices

consist of Significant Episodes

old girl-friends, parents, boy

hospital staff, and so on.

Read and hallucinated, the

accidents stack up. Larry

suffers new and old indignities

bleed and stain the bedsheet, he

girds his powerful loins, the

drop off (to sleep) like flies, the

steady rain thuds down. Victim

characterless, unlively Jay

some sort of bad-tempered

reality; and then the book, like

just comes to a stop in the middle

nowhere.

Getting it wrong

Linda Taylor

DYAN SHEDDEN

Victims of Love
215pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 434 69526 2

All novelists are in some respects behavioural scientists: they look at their characters in society, they examine the insides of their hands, they observe their behaviour. Dyan Sheldon belongs to the detached anthropological school. In a sense, she is a reductionist; human thought, particularly when it comes to relations between the sexes, is at best primitive. Responses are often predictable and bear much more relation to the history and conditioning of mankind than they do to sudden insights or logical appraisals. Sheldon, though, avoids being clinical by her implicit sympathy, her irony and her feigned glee that men can't eschew chauvinism or women, dependency on men.

In *Victims of Love*, Paul Sutcliffe is a full-time New York lecturer in English and a part-time novelist; his wife, Linda, is a full-time children's editor and a part-time parent. Paul, of course, is also a parent and recognizes the fact. With his liberal, permissive approach to human relations (he has two lovers), he is very good at mopping up the tears and generally pouring oil on the troubled waters caused, in his view

portrayal of her character's self-irony, and her own ironic stance towards her fictional creation; this is confused yet further by her desire to be "taken seriously". Since the novel relies for its self-deprecation (doubled in this case by the narrator being both female and Jewish), the problem with the ironic tone becomes an issue of importance. Moreover, no clear sense of temporal perspective is apparent; the narrator's voice is too knowing to be that of an adolescent, but doesn't appear to be at a remove from the events recounted.

Disinclined, however, would run counter to a trend manifested in those works by contemporary women novelists (Lisa Aldrich comes to mind) with which *Malden Rites* belongs. Momentum is provided by a breathless race of style, belated only by a series of sexual epiphanies. The narrative voice is condescending, eager to be liked, indolgent. But in the case of Sonia Pilger, we have too little sense of what is speaking to us to look with more than mild interest through our allotted peep-hole into the bedroom.

(end by association hers), by irrational nutbush of his wife, nice and assured and good at dines; Paul is a man who, incidentally, believes in love.

Love, for Paul, is the healer, a fur all the vagaries of human conduct. For Sheldon, love is like, the doctor that breaks up marriages and dissolves the rationale of feminist thought. Linda, dissatisfied with her lot, only love Paul when she has been in her ear-ring in her bed and has a security(?) of a lover, also much whom she has taken in order to be his husband.

Paul is writing the delicate, autobiographical novel; banal, in hold print juxtaposed with Sheldon's text reflect his present life and sense, apparently, of his past. His characters are his mother, Rita (his wife) and his dead father, Rita. While abusing and patronizing his flesh, Paul turns her into a saint, focusing on a sentimental and idealized Rita. Rita is in fact dying of cancer. She does dream, of being loved by her children; she remembers the drunken dilettante her husband.

Dyan Sheldon is good at the way which people, through egotism, can human frailty, get it wrong about other — they, or we, are all falling strangers. And the stranger we are, the more internal as external ego. Paul who loves women, also believes in his mother's "humiliating, caressing, dismissing him", and has nothing about "the timeless temptation" of his wife, his would-be wife, his mother, Linda, who at thirty-seven feels bored by entering an early-middle-aged, weepy middle-age, can also be an android mother who talks poetry to children, pours their breakfast, and reads them bedtime stories.

The feminism of this novel is in the hope for it all, perhaps, lies in the future with Linda's beleaguered, determined, eight-year-old daughter, Patricia, who gives short shrift to her arrogant or whining schoolmates and brothers alike. It is also not the main point. Sheldon's novel lies in its unrelenting shrewd portrayal of character, often revealing a mock-scientific way of she lightly and subtly puts everyone — fathers, mothers, children, dogs — in the same anthropological place.

A Death in the Family by James Agee, first published in 1958, has just been reprinted. (399pp. Heinemann. £8.95. 0 2206 2220 4) It is a book which is largely unappreciated, won its author a Pulitzer Prize.

Double-low-tar 7, licence to underkill

Kingsley Amis

JOHN GARDNER

For Special Services
255pp. Cape. £6.95.
0 224 02934 7

fan Fleming's last novel, *The Man with the Golden Gun*, appeared in 1965, the year after its author's death. I published *Colonel Sun: a James Bond adventure* under the pseudonym of Robert Markham in 1968. The next Bond novel, *Licence Renewed*, by John Gardner, did not come along till 1981. Here now is *For Special Services*, by the same author.

Quite likely it'll become a man placed as I am to say that, whereas its predecessor was bad enough by any reasonable standard, the present offering is an unrelieved disaster all the way from its aptly forgettable title to the photograph of the author — surely an unflattering likeness — on the back of the jacket. If so that is just my bad luck. On the other hand, perhaps I can claim the privilege of at least a momentary venting of indignation at the disregard into which this publication brings the name and works of Ian Fleming. Let me get something like that said before I have to start being funny and clever and risk letting the thing escape through underkill.

Over the last dozen years the Bond of the books must have been largely overlaid in the popular mind by the Bond of the films, a comic character with a lot of gadgets and witty remarks at his disposal. The temptation to let this Bond go the same way must have been considerable, but it has been resisted. Only once is he called upon to round off an action sequence with a yobbo-licking throwaway of the sort that Sean Connery used to do so good at dropping out of the side of his mouth. No ridiculous feats are required of him. His personal argument seems plausible, his car seems capable of neither flight nor underwater locomotion, his cigarettes in the gunmetal case have the three gold rings as always and M calls him 007.

Nobody else does, though. The designation is a pure horridific like Warden of the Cinque Ports; some ruling from Brussels or The Hague has put paid to the pristine Double-O

Section and its licence to kill long ago. Even the cigarettes are low-tar. But these and similar changes would hardly show if he had been allowed to keep some other interests and bits of himself, or find new ones. Does he still drink champagne with scrambled eggs and sausages? Wear a lightweight black-and-white dog-tooth check suit in the country? Do twenty slow press-ups each morning? Read *Country Life*? Ski, play baccarat and golf for high stakes, dive in scuba gear? What happened to that elegant international scene with its grand hotels and yachts? No information.

One thing Bond still does is have girls. There are three in this book, not counting a glimpse of Miss Moneybags outside Mr's door. The first is there just for local colour, around at the start, to be dropped as soon as the wheels start turning. She is called Q'ute because she comes from Q Branch. (Q himself is never mentioned, lives only in the films, belongs body and soul to Cubby Broccoli, the producer.) Q'ute is liberated and a champion of feminism. Luckily she only has two lines, but even these contain a jovial mild obscenity, and a moment later there comes a terribly subtle reference to the famous moment in the film of *Dr No* when Bond said, "Something big's come up" in ambiguous circumstances and got the hoped-for laugh from the first audiences, thus, legend says, turning the subsequent films on to their glibly course. When you consider how much the original Bond would have hated these small manifestations of what the world has become since 1960 or so, you might be led to suspect a furtive taking of the piss, but nothing like it occurs again, as if Gardner, not the most self-assured of writers, had repented of his daring.

Bond's second girl has the cacophonous and uncertainly suggestive name of Cedar Letter — yes, kin to that Felix Letter of the CIA whom sharks deprived of an arm and half a leg in *Live and Let Die* (1954). Cedar is his daughter, a perpetual and unprofitable device that raises the question, and the other of a late page: 1982. Bond keeps his hands off her throughout, perhaps out of scruple but more likely because only a satyromaniac would find her appealing. She is described as short — a deadly word. An attractive girl may be small, tiny, petite, pocket-sized and

such, but never short. Poor Cedar has no style or presence, no skills or accessories, no colour, no shape. And it is this wan creature whom Bond instantly accepts as his partner for the whole enterprise. In a Fleming novel — I nearly wrote "in real life" — Bond would have outrun sound getting away from her. To be accurate, of course, he would have done that even if she had been Pussy Galore or Domino Vitali all over again. He knew all about the way women "hang on your gun-arm" and "fog things up with sex and hurt feelings". But then that was 1953.

Bond scores all right with the third of the present trio, Nena Bismarck, née Blofeld and the revengeful daughter of his old enemy, a detail meant to be a stunning revelation near the end but you guess it instantly. Nena — let me find the place — Nena looks fantastic and has incredible black eyes. Her voice is low and clear, with a tantalizing trace of accent. She wears exceptionally well-cut jeans and has that special poise which combines all the attributes Bond most admires in a woman. When she sees him first she gives him a smile calculated to make even the most misogynistic male buckle at the knees. As she comes closer, he feels a charge, an unmistakable chemistry passing between them. From expressions like these you can estimate the amount of trouble Gardner has taken with the figure of Nena and indeed the general level of his performance. It remains to be said about her that she has a long, slender nose and — by nature, not surgery — only one breast, an arresting combination of defects. Nobody really cares when she gets thrown among the pythons on the bayou. Well, there are pythons on this bayou.

There are two other villains round the place about whose villainy no bones are made from the beginning, Nena's husband Markus and his boyfriend Walter Luxor. One is fat and enigmatic, the other of corpse-like appearance, but neither exudes a particle of menace or looks for a moment as if he would be any trouble to kill, and Nena usually knows the names of the other of a late page: 1982. The three had schemed to steal the computer tapes governing America's military space-satellites, having fed drugged ice-cream to the personnel in charge of them. Bond, brainwashed by other drugs into believing himself to be a US general, is at the head of the party

which rose feelings of authoritative clarity: a quality of simply being that washed over them like water or light, and merged them into the one landscape.

Markandaya emphasizes this element of inarticulacy in their relationship, suggesting it is proof of value. In view of the feature which most strongly characterizes her own prose, it is tempting to think that she enforces it herself. Although her novel is normally spacious and relaxed, it breaks intermittently into staccato passages. Rhythms are upset and main verbs removed as she tries to turn a style which is simple and rather bland into one which is compellingly "inward".

More often, then, the effect is to make the narrative voice sound drunk, or like a maddened Colonel. "Created, fatidically. A bit like matter, a few felt furiously. Once created, indestructible. And dodgily, their thoughts would go to the different kinds of creator."

This device remains too much of a trick to have the intensity of brevity that she intends — and during the whole length of the book it becomes not a weakness but an irritant. For all its expressed interest in interweaving private and public life in making a statement about colonialism, *Pleasure City* is abiding concern is that Tully and Rikki should "only connect" in a language that went beyond English, and was outside the scope of mere words.

Markandaya's attempts to realize this ambition make her distrustful of the formal, orthodox style which she deeply understands. Her is a deeply uneasy relation to different worlds, but it is undecided about which one its own style should inhabit.

of infiltrators, but a third set of drugs, administered by a suddenly renegade Bismarck, brings him to himself just in time. This sounds, I know, like a renewed and more radical bid to take the piss, but seen in the context of the whole book and its genesis the absurdity, however gross, is contingent, mere blundering.

I have suggested that *For Special Services* has little to do with the Bond films. In one sense this is its misfortune. Those films cover up any old implausibility or inconsistency by piling one outrage on another. You start to say to yourself "But he wouldn't —" or "But they couldn't —" and before you can finish Bond is crossing the sunward side of the planet Mercury in a tropical suit or sinking a Soviet aircraft-carrier with his teeth. Hardly a page in the book would not have gone the smoother for a diversion of this sort. Why, for instance, does the New York gang boss set his hoods on Bond when all he has to do is ask him nicely? Echo answers why. The reader is offered no relief from his bafflement.

What makes Mr Gardner's book so hard to read is not so much its endlessly silly story as its desolateness, its lack of the slightest human interest or warmth. Ian Fleming himself would have

Rubbing noses in it

T. J. Binyon

WILLIAM BOYD

An Ice Cream War
370pp. Hamish Hamilton. £7.95.
0 241 10868 3

"Alter Evelyn Waugh came Kingsley Amis, after Amis, Tom Sharpe; after Sharpe, William Boyd": so enthused one reviewer over William Boyd's first novel, *A Good Man in Africa*. The dust-jacket of his new, second novel, *An Ice Cream War*, also set in Africa, places him as a term in a very different and much more old-fashioned progression. Boyd has taken some of the story-telling and narrative conventions of the novel of colonial adventure — as practised by P. C. Wren, John Buchan and Rider Haggard — and used them for his own subversive ends. In other words, he has changed his spots and has followed a self by a historical novel, set against the background of the First World War, when a British army chased a German army commanded by von Lettow-

Yorkbeck up and down East Africa for four years without achieving any particular success. Involved in the events are Temple Smith, a fat American with a steel firm in British East Africa; Captain Gabriel Cobb of the Duke of Connaught's Own West Kent Regiment, on temporary attachment to the 69th Palscottah Light Infantry; his newly-married wife, Charis; his younger brother Felix, an Oxford undergraduate, later a subaltern in the Nigerian brigade; Erich von Bishop, a German officer, and his wife, Lisa.

The place and time put the novel, of course, into *African Queen* territory. But as a more modern and more objective author than Forester, Boyd doesn't allow his characters any display of valour, heroism or even mild bravery. The military are relentlessly presented as inefficient, incompetent, disorganized and undisciplined, officers are bone-headed, obstinate, arrogant and often drunk; other ranks are fat, shambolic and demoralized. At the unsuccessful British landing at Tanga, between Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam, in 1914, Cobb wanders through the battle as even more of an ignorant innocent than Pierre at Borodino or Fabrice at Waterloo, until he is wounded and taken prisoner. Strangely enough the German army is treated with much more respect, revealed, in the glimpses we have of it, as a model of discipline and efficiency.

The author's subversive intent is demonstrated only too obviously by his

conceded that he was not the greatest delineator of character; even so his people have genuine life and substance and many of them both experience and inspire feeling. So far from being "the man who is only a silhouette" Bond is shown to be fully capable of indignation, compunction, remorse, tenderness and a protective instinct towards defenceless creatures. His girls have a liveliness, a tenacity and sometimes a claim on affection beyond the requirements of formula. Most of the Fleming books also have a more or less flamboyant figure assisting Bond and acting as a foil to him, such as Darko Kerim, the Turkish agent in *From Russia, with Love*, and Enrico Colombo, the virtuous black-marketeer and smuggler in "Risiko". By a kind of tradition, however, earlier, stated by Buchan with Domitius Medius in *The Three Hostages*, the main character-interest in this type of novel attaches to the villain. Mr Big, Hugo Drax, Dr No and their like are persons of some size and power. They are made to seem to exist in their own right, to have been operating since long before Bond crossed their paths, rather than to have been run up on the spot for him to practise on. But then to do anything like that the writer must be genuinely interested in his material.

constant care to keep his readers' noses firmly in touch with those human functions which his more delicate predecessors would have passed by in silence. Characters retire frequently into the bush to lower their trousers and squat; Temple Smith returns to his farm to find that the Germans have left a noticeable trace of their occupation: "Every surface — shelves, table, chairs, cooking trough — was decorated with coils of human faeces, as was the floor." Even this, however, becomes a symbol for German efficiency: "It looked as if a battalion had marched in, lowered their trousers and, on the given command, had shot where they stood." Charis's prophetic methods against childbirth are described with ruthless realism, as are Felix and Temple Smith's encounters with prostitutes — both unsuccessful — in Bloomsbury and downtown Dar-es-Salaam respectively.

Subversion, however, like patriotism, is not enough; though it is not easy to see what other aim the author has in mind. In the end, with all due respect to the age of the dust-jacket, the comparison to earlier novelists fails. The book's interest is fragmented among too many characters for it to have the narrative thrust of their less self-conscious tales. It is not the story of a quest, like *Prester John*, of one man's fate, like *Beau Geste*, or even of a historical episode, as Rider Haggard's *Finished* narrates the events of the Zulu war of 1879.

Individual episodes are effective — some highly so — in erecting the African atmosphere, while others are no less comic. Yet the comedy always seems artificially imposed, brought on by the introduction of character fabricated solely for that purpose, whereas in *A Good Man in Africa* it was undeniably organic and all-embracing. Though each chapter, in the annoying habit originally established by bad thrillers, is headed by a day, a date and a place-name, no impression of cohesion, tension or movement is achieved; incidents are oddly disconnected, and the conclusion is less than dramatic. Hidden beneath the high glaze of the surface a message is perhaps struggling to get out. But its efforts are no more than tentative, and the script in which it is written remains indecipherable.

The Triple First Award, a new annual literary prize for a first novel, instituted last year by The Bodley Head, Penguin Books and Book Club Associates, awards worth £5,000, has been won by David Widdows for his novel *The Viaduct*. The novel was chosen from among 641 typescripts submitted, and was the final choice of the two consultants judges, Graham Greene and William Trevor; it will be published by The Bodley Head in February 1983, and in paperback by Penguin Books.

Yasun Girl's Abroad—the author getting in a couple of hefty swipes in revenge for Mrs Trollope and Dickens—"is the fact that the English are so supercilious. They fancy that they understand us perfectly, while they have not the remotest conception of what Americans really are." "I can pardon the arrogance which comes from misconception," remarked Maud, "what I find absolutely incomprehensible is their lack of taste".

The ideal young American of the nineteenth century emerges as something quite different from his English counterpart—tougher, more independent. Children changed as soon as they crossed the Atlantic, as can be seen by comparing Mary Howitt's account of her own Herbert and Meggy in *The Children's Year* (1847) with *Our Cousins in Ohio* (1849) which records the lives of the little nephews and nieces who had

emigrated. "Essence of hoe-handle", the Rev Elijah Kellogg told his boy readers, "if persistently taken two hours a day—or rake-handle, either, especially if there's a shower rising—will cure the most aggravated case of that disgraceful disorder [nerves]".

The American boy was encouraged to make his way in the world; Horatio Alger could reward the diligence of his street urchins with power and riches, while those who wrote similar stories for the English juvenile could never, despite the evidence of self-made men all round them, allow poor boys to rise a worldly inch. Indeed, American boyhood became almost sanctified in the latter decades of the last century, and writers mourned for a lost golden age. "Who", lamented William Allen White, "being recently banished from Boyville, has not sought to return? In vain does he haunt the swimming hole, the water elves will have none of him. He hushes their laughter, muffles their

calls, takes essence from their fun, and leaves it dust upon their lips." In *Peck's Bad Boy and his Pa* (1883) George Peck took it further, he implied that rumbustious boys ought to be carefully cultivated, they turned into the successful men. "Of course all boys are not full of ticks, but the best of them are. That is, those who are readiest to play innocent jokes, and who are continually looking for chances to make Rome howl, are the most apt to be first class business men." England, slow but dogged in taking up American fashion, eventually produced *Just William* in imitation some forty years later. But the basic ethic remained different: nobody suggested that out of William Brown might emerge a great tycoon. In fact there has never been an equivalent of Horatio Alger in England. Those who would like to consider why not, and what England offered in his place, had best study the contents of the Baldwin Library.

Surveying the field

Geoffrey Trease

JOAN AIKEN

The Way to Write for Children
Elm Tree Books. £4.95.
0 241 10746 6

MARGARET R. MARSHALL

An Introduction to the World of Children's Books
Gower Publishing. £9.50.
0 566 03437 9

At first sight Joan Aiken's "complete guide to the basic skills" looks like a manual for Writers' Cereles (as indeed it certainly should be) but it is much more than that and it deserves a far wider readership. In this crisp, informative and often witty survey of "the market" she is also giving the customers—teachers, librarians, parents, every one concerned with children's literature of quality—a good general idea of what is available already and of what authors are trying to do. For the busy adult it would be hard to find a quicker, more entertaining way of catching up in a field of knowledge where most are guilty conscious of being always out-of-date.

"Do you want to write about children or for them?" she demands, adopting a civil but no-nonsense tone from the start. She defines the difference and proceeds to the "why". In a scene of exuberant fantasy (and who better at that, as her own stories demonstrate?) she depicts a board of hooded inquisitors interrogating aspirant children's authors on their muddled motives.

While admitting that a good children's book can be enjoyed by many adults, she warns writers to put that out of their minds, for any ambiguity will be reflected in their style, and not only the work itself but its sales and promotion will suffer. Adults and children read in very different ways. Adults start with a background of earlier reading, they have a basis for comparisons, they can respond to allusions. Reading the words, "a garret in Paris", they supply their own mental picture. The child may start with no notion of either Paris or garrets. Like most authors, Joan Aiken deplores arbitrary age-groups, though, as she is giving practical advice, she is herself forced into occasional generalizations, declaring that "children up to the age of thirteen or fourteen are not ready for tragic endings". I wonder, I was much younger than that when I thrilled to the dying Roland and the fading horn at Roncevalles. And does no child respond to Robin Hood, shooting the arrow to mark his grave?

She certainly recognizes the separate public for the teenage novel, but emphasizes that "every month, every week, between the age of thirteen and twenty can bring a profound difference". No good trying to write for them unless you are a teenager yourself or in constant daily contact with them. "Anybody under twenty regards anybody over twenty-five as having one foot in the grave. She finds these teenagers a rewarding audience, since they have picked up from endless television watching a "lightning

quickness and ability to grasp stated ideas", combined with "unshockability, toughness and sophisticated sense of humour". Criteria for writing their novels are reverse of those for the modern group. They are interested in action, but in emotion. Ne happy ending is taboo, but Miss Aiken, who is responsible as well as realistic, encourages consideration before writing books that shed a glamorous light on sex, drugs or crime. She foresees, swinging here, as already in America towards a more conventional mood in such fiction.

On the creative processes she follows a pattern familiar enough to many writers—has any one discovered Kipling's "nine and ten ways of constructing a story"? It is well-arranged and pointed out, come fresh to most readers. The development, the building-up of characters, the maintenance of tension, the importance of ending, preferably conceived at an early stage (even by signing on one's notebook as a sort of night-shift) are briefly but firmly dealt with. "Bridge passages" are absolutely out. So are flashbacks. Endless television has not spoiled the reconciled young readers to look at front chronological order or "about in time". Miss Aiken knows rich and nourishing vocabulary. In fact, she declares, that "unfussy words will discourage children". Perhaps that depends on the children. Elsewhere she admits to books, competing with television "can't afford to place too many bets in the reader's way". But a tiny inconsistency may be forgiven her, obviously on the side of the angels.

With Margaret Marshall we are another "world of children's books". Indeed, a much-travelled librarian, teacher, an Eleanor Farjeon and a winner, she must be heard in respect. But whereas Miss Aiken is uncompromisingly concerned with children's literature as "those books to read and by children", she highlights the problems of *Stargate*, which has four languages and an important book of "little relevant" experience and culture of its time. It is natural that, with her own West African and West Indian experience, she should concentrate on such aspects, but it leaves inadequate space for the other important general interest—the writing of words, criteria for selection, and the workings of the book trade—presented in her publisher's blurb. The coverage is sketchy and too often a summary of the self-evident.

For whom is the book really intended? It is set out almost as a textbook form with long lists and numbered paragraphs. Words like "therapeutic" and "cathartic" are kindly explained to us. "Reading interests" are (test we should be puzzled) "those books or themes of interest children". And the use of photographs "has recently opened up the information book scene". The instruction may be much needed somewhere. But surely the people who are interested in children and their books do not still need telling this kind of thing?

Jack-in-the-Box

Jack-in-the-Box is faithful,
Jack-in-the-Box is true.
But Jack-in-the-Box
is alone in his box.
And Jack-in-the-Box wants you.
Jack-in-the-Box is cunning,
Jack-in-the-Box is sly.
Can Jack-in-the-Box
Get out of his box?
Oh Jack-in-the-Box will try.

John Malt

Unearthing the family ghosts

Sarah Hayes

MARGARET MAHY

The Haunting
Dent. £4.95.
0 460 06097 X

Margaret Mahy has deserved her reputation as queen of the light fantastic with stories and picture-book texts which erupt with delightful visions. Now she displays a darker side in a full-length novel which centres on the possession of one sensitive, but ordinary, small boy.

The last decade has seen the emergence of the "family novel": Margaret Mahy has joined Jan Mark, Madeleine L'Engle and Louise Fitzhugh in writing stories in which parent and sibling relationships are vital and dynamic elements in the plot, not merely background details of the child stars. *The Haunting* manages to combine a realistic approach to family life—in which how you feel about your parents and yourself is actually important—with a strong and terrifying

line in fantasy. The story is built round conversations over family meals which are linked by graphic descriptions of what is going on inside the head of Barney Palmer.

At first Barney thinks he senses the return of his three, long absent, imaginary friends, Mantis, Bighuzz and Ghost. Then, as the drone in his head forms itself into a child in a blue velvet suit who is so alive that it is Barney who feels unreal, he understands that he is being haunted. The ghost has a message for him: "Barney's dead. And I'm going to be very lonely", it says over and over again. When Barney returns from school to find his sister welcoming him importantly over the threshold with the announcement of the death of a dear relation, Barney faints. It is, in fact, a very real and elderly great uncle, Barnaby, who has died, releasing the lonely presence in Barney's head. A meeting with the extended family, the terrible Uncle Albany Scholar reveals a skeleton in the cupboard in the form of a lost Great Uncle Cole who disappeared, feared drowned, as a boy. Before Barney's older sister, the

irrepressible novel-writing Tabitha, can pursue the trail of the black-sheep uncle, Great Granny concentrates all her attention on her great grandson, declaring with sudden sharpness to the assembled family that Barney is "one of the unreliable kind... who make a lot of trouble for others".

Barney's ghostly voice informs him that the "unreliable kind" are Scholar magicians and that Barney himself has inherited the power which runs "like a line of crimson across the world's rainbow". Barney maintains that he is a boy, just a boy, not a magician at all, but the voice knows better: it recognizes the power that emanates from Barney's household, and in any case it will soon be with Barney. The voice falls silent, contenting itself with footsteps that grow louder as the ghost of sinister Uncle Cole approaches Barney to remove him from the family which has no place for him, to join forces and confront the universe. When Barney looks in the mirror, it is Cole's orange owl eyes he sees, not his own.

The novel winds up like a spring which is released suddenly to produce a real-life Uncle Cole prepared to absorb

the normal swings and roundabouts of the family life he missed as a child. His mother, terrible Great Granny Scholar, had feared and hated Cole's power which was so loud and strong where her own had been suppressed and squashed. She had hidden away her strange son, and let everyone think him an idiot. And it turns out that it is not Barney who is the magician, but his taciturn, tormented elder sister, Troy, ecstatic now to have her power freed at last.

What Margaret Mahy has achieved where many have failed is to write a psychological thriller alongside a tale of ghosts and magic. At any twist in the story, it is possible to make a non-fanciful reading and to see Barney's

haunting as the production of an imaginative and fearful mind: he knows that his real mother died when he was born, and now his adored stepmother is pregnant and he fears he may cause her death, too. This neurotic interpretation is delicately suggested, and remains in the wings as the magical production unfolds. The details of dreams and nightmares are notoriously dull in the telling, but Margaret Mahy has a touch as deft as ever. The strange pictures of the mind invade with terrible clarity the ordinary geography of daily life. And the warmth and closeness that underlie the vigorous family dialogues bear no trace of sentimentality: it is possible to believe, for once, that we are such stuff as dreams are made on.

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ff

Balkan bravura

Alan Brownjohn

JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND

A Foreign Affair
Kestrel. £5.95.
0 7226 5780 3

At a boring party, seventeen-year-old Kate Millbank receives implausible advances from a dashing Ruritanian princeling, Rudl of Essenheim, who is tall, dark, oval-faced and overwhelmingly charming. It is implausible, because Kate herself is short and dumpy, "the only child of a one-parent family—her father is a hard-working newspaperman—and studying for her A Levels in Hammersmith; and it reads like a lazily improbable bit of plotting at the very beginning. But John Rowe Townsend has never been at a loss in his novels for ways of giving unlikely events a foundation of credibility, and *A Foreign Affair* shows him putting himself through his own hoops with extravagant dexterity in an absorbingly farcical political comedy.

The "beautiful" Rudl (Kate's adjective for him is just right: this smiling young cavalier is far too good to be true) is the heir to the throne of Essenheim, a principality which has been forgotten by modern history. This is just credible also, as not many of us could swear we know what lies immediately to the east of Switzerland. Essenheim has hardly a hotel; only a meagre wine industry, a one-plane airline, a three-man pop radio station (no television) and one bi-weekly newspaper typeset by hand. Rudl is engaged to be married, to a ten-year-old son of an exiled royal who has the money Essenheim badly needs. While in England he must not be seen to be furthering any suspicious political schemes, but he can be seen to be chasing young ladies. Hence the interest in Kate, who conveniently possesses the kind of well-built beauty much admired in Essenheim—and would make an acceptable mistress for Rudl while he waits for his ten-year-old fiancée to come of age.

A Foreign Affair manages to be suitably grown-up—even daring—about these sexual matters because of a fine lightness of touch in plot and characterization where other authors would signal the serious themes with heavy solemnity. This is not its only skill. Now is Mr Townsend to get Kate to Essenheim with enough of the Essenheimers' rough mountain language to get by? Because she is initially enamoured of Rudl (though we could perhaps do without the "curiously melting" effect of his smile), she takes lessons in it, and is therefore well-equipped for the trip, as well as romantically inclined to it. Rudl suddenly surfaces with an invitation for Kate from his sister Anni, and some pressing political reasons which he does not disclose. All at once, they are

on their way, by car via Dover, pursued by secret agents.

The invention of a glamorously archaic and daff foreign country has its fascinations, and John Rowe Townsend has fast-moving fun with them. The original Ruritania, and the original Rudolf (Rassendyll), had enough Balkan bravura to seem vaguely possible, but this Essenheim hardly ever does. This is comic opera, or even Marx Brothers, terrain, dragged into 1982 with students who are working for degrees in "studies" (including "active passive resistance"), a guinea-pigging young aristocrat who wants his own grove, a "Colonel Schweiner" who exists somewhere between Amn and Tejero, and the designing Herr Pinkel.

Backwards in time

Colin Greenland

DELIA HUDDY

The Humboldt Effect
Julia MacRae. £5.95.
0 86203 043 9

Despite the educational ideals of a handful of writers expert in both disciplines, science fiction's principal interest in science is not exposition but piracy. Science is plundered to facilitate a plot or a sensational idea. Little attention is given to the tolerances of the original discovery or theory provided it sounds convincing, which usually means authoritatively mystifying.

The latest enabling device for time-travel stories is the tachyon, a subatomic particle which apparently moves faster than light and therefore, relativistically, backwards in time. The tachyon was introduced to sf by Gregory Benford, Professor of Physics at California, who did much of the original work on the elusive effect and then used it to short-circuit causality in his award-winning novel *Timescape*. Effect is a displacement of quantities of tachyons, which generates a local reversal of time in a specially-prepared zone. In this case an area of sea thirty miles off Tel Aviv. The plot of her book concerns Arthur Smith, a scientist who falls overboard from the monitoring submarine. The men crew pull out of the water, however, is not Arthur but an Israeli from the fourth century ac. The resolution of the mystery depends on the team's capacity to repeat the experiment exactly, and Arthur's ability, washed up on a deserted beach, to deduce where he is and when, and what he must do about it.

Both these conditions are swiftly and efficiently fulfilled, which rather

minimizes their interest. The Humboldt Effect is repeated after three days without a hitch, and Arthur's first guess is the right one. It requires him to work out the identity of the survivor rescued by the submarine; but since we are given no prior hint that his identity would mean anything at all, to Arthur or to us, this revelation is parenthetical. Indeed, it is not clear where Huddy expects the appeal of her book to lie. Certainly not in the Effect itself, for though her research provides her with some impressive techniques and equipment, she deploys them in a referential way, without explanation. Her sop to science and the enquiring adolescent reader is, inevitably, a lecture on tachyons; but the theory is muddled and the lecture perfunctory. Huddy saves herself from having to probe further by electing a viewpoint character who knows no physics and falls asleep halfway through. She uses most of the major characters as viewpoint at one time or another, even those in whom she is plainly uninterested, which makes unconvincing reading. It is obvious that character, or at least psychology, is her main concern, the primary subject being Arthur Smith's best friend Luke Crantock, leader of the team and bearer of an unsuspected torch for Arthur's wife Mary.

The plot as described above takes place within some sixty pages; the remaining ninety-odd describe Luke's anxieties (and Mary's, and others') before and after. They plague themselves with questions. These are not the creative questions of growing up, which they were in the preceding volume *Time Piper*. Luke, barely in his twenties, seems prematurely middle-aged. He thinks his lucky stars, cries "Strewth!" and tells people to take a running jump. His colleagues are well-to-do or better-off, get the jumps or another feather in their caps, tachyons or no, this is old-fashioned

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Going Home
0 19 271459 7

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GILLIAN CROSS

The Demon Headmaster
0 19 271460 0
Oxford University Press. £3.50 each.

These days, any books which try to keep down costs should be applauded—that is, if the material they provide is in any way worth having. Oxford University Press's new Eagle Books are designed for eight to twelve year olds, and are aimed at the school or public library. The first three volumes in this series are slender tales, nicely set out and illustrated, the print fairly large on good quality paper. The stories themselves are too slight by far for the usual twelve year old, but for the younger child, or one with a reading problem, should enjoy them. Certainly the plots are designed to suit a variety of tastes.

All three are written with some competence: two tread warily on the borders of science fiction and the need to make the extraordinary believable inevitably brings problems that only talent can make credible. The best of the trio is the one firmly in touch with reality, K. M. Peyton's *Going Home*. This author generally writes for an older readership with great and deserved success. Here, her elegant style, though simplified, hits exactly the right note to appeal to younger children. Milly and Mike are taken by Fred, their welfare officer (an old friend) to stay with their respectable aunt and uncle while their not so respectable mother is in hospital—a breakdown is implied, brought on by trouble with absent dad. Both hate leaving their scruffy home and are reluctant to be taken abroad on a canal holiday in France. It turns out that French canalside life is not lively enough to please the adults and although Milly finds the peaceful country existence increasingly attractive, Mike becomes more and more upset by the constant bickering around him, and correspondingly increasingly difficult. Milly decides they must run away back to England. The account of their flight is very believable, and includes a delightful sequence in which the children reach the fairy-tale chateau previously noticed by Milly from the boat and find a meal laid out for the family's return. Like Goldilocks, they eat, sleep, are discovered and run away. Needless to say, they do succeed in reaching the chateau, and although they are then discovered, all ends happily, but again credibly, with their mother out of hospital and Fred around to help.

With *Jump* one is on more difficult territory. Frederick the village boy is warned by a mole one morning that the

world will end unless he persuades everyone on it to jump, all at the same time. This is because the giant "Magma", disturbed by human activities, is about to turn over; unless pressure is taken off the overweight globe for an instant, the moles cannot repair the damage. With the help of an eccentric professor and an out-of-work actor this is achieved, but not before London has vanished into the abyss. The far-fetched idea is narrowly saved from too much whimsy by the pleasant competence of the writing; the author is completely at home in the country and the fantasy does not therefore seem too silly. The book ends very well: everyone jumps—but whether the world is saved or not is left to the reader to decide.

The Demon Headmaster would, I suppose, qualify as a rattling good yarn, with the overtones of science-fiction to add savour to an old theme. Dinah and her foster brothers are at a school dominated by a strange, green-eyed headmaster who holds most of the school in hypnotic thrall. Only a handful of pupils resist his spell and at the last minute succeed in thwarting his plans to dominate the country through the television screen during a school quiz programme. The book contains a television compère who specializes in revolting gimmicks and humiliation for his victims. The author carries this caricature to the point of absurdity, although the intended reader would probably not object as much as an adult would. (Interestingly, television also

features in *Jump*, where a chat show with a similarly dreadful star is used to further effect. Are writers ganging up on the rival media? But the school atmosphere is rather well caught and this book will undoubtedly appeal to children more than to their parents.

On the whole, then, this is a laudable new venture, although with too much of an overblown air of having been written to order: the stories are slightly padded, with overweighed plots for their length. Worth a place in a well-endowed library, especially if some not-too-demanding books are wanted to fill the gap. Only *Going Home* deserves more serious consideration; the other two authors should certainly expand their talents in future books.

A particular past

Gillian Cross

SANDY ASHER

Friends and Sisters
Gollancz. £5.50.
0 575 03124 7

"We've got to do something about the earthquake in Bucharest!", bursts out thirteen-year-old Denise. And why not? But instead of sending her pocket money, she quarrels with her parents and goes on a failed hunger strike. When she turns out, also, to be clumsy and very self-conscious about the fact that she does not wear a bra while Maxine Fitzhugh takes a 32B, it seems

that we are in for yet another affectionate comedy of American adolescence.

But this book is much odder. The central story concerns Denise's new friend, Ruthie Morgenthau, a mysteriously gloomy girl who has just moved to town with her recently widowed mother. Gradually Denise learns that Ruthie's parents were concentration camp survivors and that Ruthie, who has never been told the details of their story, is morbidly obsessed by the horrors of the concentration camps. Ruthie becomes more and more distressed when she is encouraged by her dynamic Aunt Sarah to be bat mitzvahed, thus publicly acknowledging the Jewishness which her dead father rejected. When

Aunt Sarah—a prominent local politician—is physically attacked and called "Jew bastard", Ruthie's dilemma becomes unbearable and she withdraws into complete apathy. Denise saves her by sending round the local rabbi. He solves all problems miraculously by persuading his wife, Morgenthau, to tell Ruthie about her wartime experiences, which were wretched but not horrific. Ruthie proceeds to a triumphant bat mitzvah.

Ruthie's relationship with her mother and the looming memory of the concentration camps are at the heart of this story. Unfortunately, Ms Morgenthau is a shadowy figure who appears to combine acute and long-standing depression with conscientiously meticulous work as a dressmaker. Even when she tells her story, she does not emerge as a distinctive character. The horror of the concentration camps is made so much real. It suffices only once, when Ruthie shows Denise a bag of photographs of naked, skeletal victims which Mrs Morgenthau—most improbably—keeps in her dressing-table drawer. Presumably this detail is intended to evoke the whole Holocaust, but I wonder how many younger teenage readers actually know much about it. Without the background knowledge, Ruthie's obsession remains, like her relationship with her mother, vague and colourless.

Nor, although Aunt Sarah does "L'chaim!" and Ruthie prides herself on her Hebrew, is there any explication of the Jewishness which Ruthie is being asked to affirm. Her dead father rejected it fiercely. But Sarah clings to it fanatically and Ruthie must choose, but the reader is given no real insight into the meaning of the choice. In conception, this is a powerful and gloomy, if rather improbable, book, but to execution it is slight and insubstantial. Because it is impossible for the reader to share Ruthie's agonies, she seems morose and apologetic. The only character who shows real vitality are Denise, her family and her classmates. And she gives the book an unpleasant taste, in that it may not be a good idea to remind young readers of the terrible sufferings of the Jews, but it is, in any case, somehow indecent to make the Holocaust less interesting than the life of Maxine Fitzhugh's bra.

The theme of the Eighteenth Congress of IBBY (the International Board on Books for Young People) which was held this year at Cambridge College, Cambridge from September 6-10, was "Story in the Child's Changing World". The discussion papers given at the conference included "On Fairy-Tales and Folklore" by Edward Peck, "Picture Book Storytelling" by Margaret Fisher, "Comic-Strips and Storytelling" by Pierre Frenault-Durand, "International Co-operation in Publishing" by Kyoko Matsuo, "Multi-Cultural Fiction" by Judith Ellis, "Minority Fiction" by Zean Sander, "Problem-Oriented Literature for Children and Adolescents" by Elisabeth-Brigitte Schindler and "The Social Role of Fiction for Young People" by Gerda Neumann.

The Royal Hair

The Empress is five feet tall, her hair is six feet long and curls behind her in processions.

Every morning I clean out her comb and prepares perfumed oils to dress her black strands.

Today she sits on a silk cushion watching the snow fall. Her voice is weak—her hair is damp and I can tell she is drowning in a sea of tears.

The tangles and knots are as thick as a jungle but I don't mind—my hair is twice as fine and shiny.

Julie O'Callaghan

Packing it in

Josephine Karavasil

SHIRLEY HUGHES

Charlie Moon and the Big Bonanza
Bodley Head. £4.25.
0 270 30918 9

The Lady Illustrator down on her knees drawing the outline of a huge dragon and pushing stray wisps of hair back into her bun sounds like—and indeed looks like—Shirley Hughes herself, who doubles here as Lady Writer of her second Charlie Moon book. The integration of pictures with text is more ambitious than in *Here Comes Charlie Moon* and works particularly well at some of the most active moments of the plot. Best of all are the beautifully composed preliminary complete with cast list, and the final scene for Mr. Poyen, the painter.

However, the paragraph which accompanies this illustration seems itself implicitly to commend art and property merchants, and to overstate the case for art in this way. Indeed, compare to both *Charlie Moon* books is the portrayal of people as sympathetic and more worldly types as unsympathetic.

The book opens with Charlie in pitch darkness, stumbling about inside the back legs of a horse as he practices with his friend Dodger for the Book Bonanza organized by Linda, the children's librarian. They end in a heap on the floor, intertwined with a robot. With Charlie's young uncle, Norman, they all visit Linda's uncle, Owen Bowen, the artist living in the top floor of an old house. Owen Bowen is a painter and the artist who painted the picture of the dragon.

has been trying to get his tenant out by making smells in the hallways (with mousy kippers under the floorboards) and then complaining about them. He is also keen to get his hands on the valuable old chalk drawing of Owen Bowen's grandmother. When he does so, he is followed by two bam-banded antique shop owners, one a tough, other a hypochondriac, who want the drawing for themselves. In a somewhat far-fetched plot which ends up with the magician at the Book Bonanza, TV personality Duggie Bubbles, being the younger brother of Mr. Dix, the theft is exposed and the drawing returned to its owner.

Perhaps more impressive than the plot itself is the speed with which it moves. Shirley Hughes obviously has a firm grasp of the concentration span of her potential readers and she packs each chapter with so much incident that even the wider coincidences of the plot are forgivable. *Charlie Moon* is a fast and a quick read for eight to

One to ten and beyond

Lucy Micklethwait

In the world of counting books, Eric Carle's *The Hungry Caterpillar* is hard to follow. Jeannie Baker has tried with *One Hungry Spider*. "One hungry spider spun a web between two branches. Three birds flew by..." The pictures are photographs of stuffed insects set against an increasingly dilapidated wall and a few twigs. It is not easy to make this type of ingredient look interesting and the author hasn't.

The watercolour illustrations to *One Two Number Zoo* are much more interesting. Each number is used as a frame to contain the appropriate amount of creatures flying or crawling or swimming about in their natural habitats. All are finely painted, managing to be both detailed but miraculously uncluttered and it is clear that the illustrator has a superb sense of colour and a professional eye for design. Accompanying the pictures are rhymes, or rather ditties ("One fish/cold fish/two fish/goldfish...") of which some are better than others. The word "Zoo" in the title is a misnomer since few of the creatures would be seen in such a place—I fear that it was chosen merely to rhyme with "Two".

The third and last of the counting books in this selection is *Who's Afraid?* This is not a pop-up book but a flap-up book. The pictures are stylized, the colours garish and gaudy. "Who's afraid of one big dragon?"—turn two flaps simultaneously and there he is, bright pink and blue and breathing fire. "Not me," says the little boy. None of the ghosts, spooks, goblins or piles of frightful hair, but when it comes to the mice... (I asked my four-year-old which of this selection of books he preferred and without hesitation, he chose this one. It goes to show that there is no accounting for taste.)

It may not matter to a child how crude the artwork is. If the accompanying story contains some nasty or subversive element. However, I would argue that, since stories for under-fives have to be read aloud by some long-suffering adult, they should contain at least some aesthetically pleasing qualities so that fun can be had by both parties. I would also accept that *Plaid Bear* and *The Ride Rabbit Gang* as a favourite book.

Plaid Bear, a toy-town bear, stitched up like a seaman, dressed in orange and yellow tartan and carrying bagpipes, sets off with his best friends, Sarah Mouse, Rod Panda and Amanda Chicken, for a holiday at Dingle-by-the-Sea. But wherever they go there is the gang of rude robbers being rotten, speeding around on bicycles like toy-town hell's angels, spilling the seaside fun. Of course, they get their come-uppance in the end, thanks to the local policeman Finn Doggo. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with this story, but it is unimaginatively treated and the illustrations are weak and lacking in character.

Teddybears go Shopping is a curious book. At first sight it appears to be a nonsensical jumble. Susanna Gretz's teddybears with their droopy eyelids and benign smiles are now familiar. On the endpapers and title page they make their entrance, each coloured differently, each named and each dancing. They make a shopping list: "ice cream and peas, soap and cheese, cereal, buns and bubblebath..." and set off for the supermarket. They get in a terrific muddle and the reader spends the rest of the book trying to remember which bear is called what and which items each is meant to be getting. This is the sort of perambulation exercise which adults find extremely difficult but which small children find easy. By the way, no one forgot the ice cream.

Rodney Peppé's *Run Rabbit, Run!* is a pop-up book. Jan Plezkowski is so good at this medium that the work of all other pop-up artists tends to be disappointing. In *Run Rabbit, Run!* not very much happens when the tabs are pushed or pulled; this might be practical considering that this is a

Kicki Moxon Browne

The horse-head fiddle is a Mongolian stringed instrument made of animal hide and hair with a small horse's head carved at the scroll end; it is often used to accompany recitatives of a magical character. *Suho and the White Horse* is the legend of how the instrument was first created. It is a moving and beautiful story of love, treachery, sacrifice and death, and the healing mystical powers of music and this is a thoroughly pleasing book which seems to offer more on each re-reading. Although perhaps lacking in superficial appeal, the illustrations are quite magnificent, capturing the huge, sweeping expanses of the Mongolian steppes, the changes in colour and texture interpreting the underlying mood as the story unfolds.

The Prince and the Firebird is the story taken from Stravinsky's ballet *The Firebird* (the libretto for which was manufactured from several different Russian fairy tales). The story-telling is clear and pragmatic, allowing the illustrator to shine, with her lush romantic vernacular. The book would be an excellent preparation for anyone about to see the ballet for the first time. Like Krystyna Turka's Paul Galdone is an illustrator who specializes in folk tales. But while Turka's paintings show and swirl in great fluid shapes (or the gang of rude robbers being rotten, speeding around on bicycles like toy-town hell's angels, spilling the seaside fun. Of course, they get their come-uppance in the end, thanks to the local policeman Finn Doggo. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with this story, but it is unimaginatively treated and the illustrations are weak and lacking in character.

simple story for very young children, but it is not very exciting. Pop-up books should make up in animation for what they inevitably lack in length.

The next three books are the best of the present selection. All have clear professional illustrations, all have humour and all have simple solid stories which can be read aloud repeatedly without jarring. *Alfie's Feet* is Shirley Hughes's second book about Alfie and his little sister Annie Rose. Shirley Hughes is able to make a good story out of the most ordinary of childhood experiences and to depict with ease the chaos and humour of family life in her free-flowing illustrations. Alfie, like any other little boy, likes to splash about in puddles, so his mum buys him a pair of wellies. He puts them on and goes splashing around the park but, for some reason, they feel funny. Finding they are on the wrong feet is a happy discovery. In the background Dad makes the coffee while Mum sits, careworn but content with her shoes kicked off, and little Annie Rose goes unnoticed as she unpicks the entire contents of the shopping basket on the floor.

Benedict Finds a Home is about a bird who is tired of living in a crowded nest with all his sisters and brothers and launches off in search of pastures new. He tries various inviting-looking nooks but none proves suitable and he ends up back at home. The pictures are economically pointed in watercolour and Benedict himself is delightful.

Lastly there is *Who Sank the Boal?* by New Zealand Pamela Allen, author and illustrator of the award-winning *Mr Archimedes' Bath*. She continues on the theme of water and the bulk of things therein. A cow, a donkey, a pig and a sheep and a tiny little mouse decide to go for a row in the bay. Do you know who sank the boat? "Was it the cow/who almost fell in/when she tilted the boat/made such a din/No... As in *Mr Archimedes' Bath* the text could have been fuller, but no matter. This is only Pamela Allen's second picture book. Her ideas are good and her illustrations are very fine.

Battles in the Bath is a surrealist adventure at bathtime. A young girl takes a bath with her toy duck and her frog. The toys immediately start squabbling, and they begin to change shape, growing in size. Their heads become transformed, taking on the shapes of a cow, a monkey, a bulldog, as they continue to assault one another. Meanwhile, plants begin to sprout through the bathroom floor. The whole room has soon turned into a jungle, and the bath itself becomes a small little monster. Suddenly they are all in a real jungle, face to face with a ghastly monster. They escape down a steep path, leading to a pond. They dive in headlong, and emerge triumphantly with a great splash out of the bathtub, safely back in a bathroom once again free of vegetation. This curious book was an instant hit with some five year olds, who particularly related the mixing up of the animals' heads. But the book is described as being for children of all ages, and it certainly works on more than one level. Indeed just below the surface there runs a powerful thread of sexual symbolism, some of it of the most direct and unambiguous kind: one point the girl straddles her buttocks from behind, gripping her with hands and thighs. Some will find the book unpleasant on this account: after looking at the book all will agree that there had to be more than one way of experiencing bathtime.

Yuzo Otsuka: Suho and the White Horse. Illustrated by Suekichi Akaba. Dent. £5.50. 0 406 06119 4.

LINO M. JENNINGS: *The Prince and the Firebird*. Illustrated by Krystyna Turka. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.94. 0 340 25557 9.

JOANNA GALDONE: *The Little Girl and the Big Bear*. Illustrated by Paul Galdone. World's Work. £4.50. 0 437 42534 7.

HELENE HEINE: *Friends*. Dent. £4.50. 0 460 06100 3.

NICK DALY: *Joseph's Other Red Sock*. Gollancz. £3.95. 0 575 03008 9.

JILL MURPHY: *On the Way Home*. Moccillan. £4.50. 0 333 32431 5.

RORY O'BRIEN: *Mr Pinkerton's Hat*. Illustrated by Claire Mumford. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 10819 5.

PETER PAVEY: *Dances in the Bath*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 10857 8.

JEANNIE BAKER: *One Hungry Spider*. Andre Deutsch. £4.95. 0 233 97329 6.

GABRIELLA STODART and MARTIN BAKER: *One Two Number Zoo*. Hodder and Stoughton. £4.95. 0 340 26435 7.

RON and ATY VAN DER MEER: *Who's Afraid?* Hamish Hamilton. £4.95. 0 241 10731 8.

P. K. ROCHIE: *Plaid Bear and the Rude Rabbit Gang*. Julie MacRae Books. £4.95. 0 86203 088 9.

SUSANNA GRETZ: *Teddybears go Shopping*. Ernest Benn. £4.50. 0 510 00132 7.

ROUNEY PEPPÉ: *Run Rabbit, Run!*. Methuen. £4.95. 0 416 22060 6.

SHIRLEY HUGHES: *Alfie's Feet*. Bodley Head. £3.95. 0 370 30416 0.

CHYRIS L. DEMAREST: *Benedict Finds a Home*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 10839 X.

PAMELA ALLEN: *Who Sank the Boal?* Hamish Hamilton. £4.75. 0 241 10858 6.

The magic of everyday things

Kicki Moxon Browne

by a nice, soothing touch (often found in traditional tales); even the villain will always stick to his promise.

Returning to the everyday, *Friends* is a cosy account of the friendship between three animals, a mouse, a cock and a pig. We watch them spend the day together, roaring round the countryside on an old bicycle (one on each pedal and one on the handlebars). They do everything together like true friends should, but at bedtime, having all tried in turn the mousehole, the piggy and the perch, they decide that they are after all quite different, and each sets off to his own bed to dream happy dreams of one another. Helene Heine's lovely, generous watercolours exude warmth and fun, and the animals are chubby and loveable without being sentimental. *Joseph's Other Red Sock* is also about everyday life, but with an element of the extraordinary. A little boy dressing in the morning can only find one sock. In looking for the other, he finds something "funny, long and wiggly" sticking out of his cupboard, pulls it out, and out jumps an enormous, elephantine clothes monster with Joseph's other sock perched on its ear. Joseph gets his sock back after a bit of a struggle, and the monster retreats back into the cupboard, leaving "rather a mess" behind it. Joseph puts on his second sock and one shoe... and on the next page we see his other shoe right by the cupboard, with a monster hand poking round the side of the door.

On the Way Home also features an ordinary child making really a little bit more interesting. Claire falls and hurts her knee in the playground, and on her way home she meets no less than nine of her friends, one at a time. They are all in turn treated to a different story, each more lurid than the next, of how it all happened. Only when Claire gets

home can she let the heroic mask slip, have a good howl and be treated to the biggest plaster in the box by her mother. The story is arranged in the form of a strip cartoon in clear pictures, and the text contains a fair amount of consciously simple repetition. An effective contrast to the melodrama.

In *Mr Pinkerton's Hat*, also partly in the form of a strip cartoon, we meet the routine-bound Mr. Pinkerton, measuring out his life in little rituals, so time-consuming that he never has time to do anything except keep his life in order. One day he discovers that his hat is a magic one, and that everything that he wishes for will appear from under it. At first he enjoys the excitement of being able to conjure up endless toys and snacks; and he even dreams of admiration and fame. But soon things get out of control and finally he has had enough and gets rid of everything, including a tiger, who had arrived by mistake, and the hat. Mr. Pinkerton buys a new hat, intending to start afresh—but on the final page, with the caption "The end?" he is seen with a huge dragon emerging from under the new one.

Battles in the Bath is a surrealist adventure at bathtime. A young girl takes a bath with her toy duck and her frog. The toys immediately start squabbling, and they begin to change shape, growing in size. Their heads become transformed, taking on the shapes of a cow, a monkey, a bulldog, as they continue to assault one another. Meanwhile, plants begin to sprout through the bathroom floor. The whole room has soon turned into a jungle, and the bath itself becomes a small little monster. Suddenly they are all in a real jungle, face to face with a ghastly monster. They escape down a steep path, leading to a pond. They dive in headlong, and emerge triumphantly with a great splash out of the bathtub, safely back in a bathroom once again free of vegetation. This curious book was an instant hit with some five year olds, who particularly related the mixing up of the animals' heads. But the book is described as being for children of all ages, and it certainly works on more than one level. Indeed just below the surface there runs a powerful thread of sexual symbolism, some of it of the most direct and unambiguous kind: one point the girl straddles her buttocks from behind, gripping her with hands and thighs. Some will find the book unpleasant on this account: after looking at the book all will agree that there had to be more than one way of experiencing bathtime.

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PETER PAVEY: *Dances in the Bath*. Hamish Hamilton. £4.50. 0 241 10857 8.

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I REALLY WANT TO DANCE

Richard Glasstone and David Hodgson (authors)
Simon Rae-Scott (photographer

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Margery Fisher, *The Sunday Times*

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ROSEMARY COURT

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Ages 7-11. Available £5.95

The kingdoms of the intellect

Redmond O'Hanlon

PETER WARD

The Adventures of Charles Darwin illustrated by Annabel Large
Cambridge University Press. £3.95.
0 521 24510 9

In excessive conformity to the cruder expectations of the laws of natural and sexual selection, the natives of Tierra del Fuego, when short of food in a hard winter, as Darwin tells us in the second edition of the *Journal of Researches* (1845), "kill and devour their old women before they kill their dogs".

In the unanswerable logic of a local boy this is because "Doggies catch others, old women no." And he also documents "the manner in which they are killed by being held over smoke and then cooked; he imitated their screams as a joke, and described the part of their bodies which are considered best to eat." Darwin felt that "Horrid as such a death by the hands of their friends and relatives must be, the fears of the old women, when hunger begins to press, are more painful to think of; we were told that they then often run away into the mountains, but that they are pursued by the men and brought back to the slaughter-house at their own desires."

The fictional hero of Peter Ward's book, George Carter cabin-boy on HMS Beagle ("You will never have heard of me. To be honest I am no-one special, yet I know of tales to make a person's hair stand on end") feels free to tell his nine to twelve-year-old audience all about it in his own words, but, probably quite rightly, decides to keep to himself the story of the small Fuegian boy who, dropping a basket of sea eggs, had his brains beaten out by his father against the rocks.

But then Darwin himself is as perfect a father-figure as anyone could wish. And George, his inseparable snail companion, having taught the great man how to get into a hammock without immediately coming out again,

learns many equally precious secrets in return.

"Dust, George! Dust! Think of it!" shouts Darwin, three hundred miles out from the coast of Africa. "Why, sir," cries George, "I dusted your cabin only last night." Yet this is no ordinary housekeeping kind of dust, but the cloud of particles which another, rather better-known young voyager "looked particularly after" in passing the Cap de Vord fifteen years later. T. H. Huxley on HMS Rattlesnake, describes "the dust mentioned by Darwin", the fine cargo of the high atmospheric winds, containing, among the gravity sieved soil and powdered rock, spores of African and (as Darwin correctly thought) South American plants, the potential colonizers of newly-raised islands.

George misses the ceremonial shaving of initiates as the Equator is crossed, hiding out in a snail locker on the sensible premise that he has nothing to shave; but he helps to quell a revolution, comes under fire from a Buenos Aires gunship ("A cannonball flew straight for my head! Desperately clinging to the yardarm, I ducked just as the missile passed over"), and, temporarily deserting ship to ride with Mr Harris and Darwin across the pampas, is spirited away by a gaucho on a private punn-hunting expedition and attacked by Indians. The eyeballs when a redoubt "The bird hissed at me as I fell backwards in fright. It flapped its wings, and aimed one foot in my direction ("Killer and boy to the punn cabin!"). Darwin's actual servant, on the expedition to Punta Arenas, where the gigantic bones of the extinct mammoth-like *Megatherium*, the Megalonyx and the Toxodon were so dramatically disinterred from an upraised bed of sand and gravel and shells; and he is caught in the 1834 Valdivia earthquake.

This literal and conceptual shaking of mind and body ("Now I began to understand the words of Mr Darwin when he told me of the power of the earth below, which can twist and change the surface") makes George, as

it did Darwin himself, a first earthquake, for instance, on the island of Ternate in the Archipelago.

was a very slight one... I awoke at gun-lira (5.15) and suddenly the thatch began to shake as if an army of giants were jumping over it, and I found myself in bed looking out at a furrow in the ground... in New Guinea, in my first voyage, which shook when an earthquake roared on the night of the 1st of January, 1845, I was so solidly crumpled that I was unable to move. "Why, it's an earthquake!"

George Carter rides a tortoise on the Galapagos and even enters the witness stand at the trial of the *Madcap of the Fourth* and so on. So I can imagine children playing the role of the 'joke', though anonymous, 'kids' in the Moyle and Robins gallery; plotting against grown-ups, spying through their strategems, exploiting them, playing one off against the other: "The nearest sources of money are your parents. They get it by working for it, and they probably give you a little each week to buy vital supplies like ice-cream and comics. But for real money - the kind that buys bicycles - you can't expect them to pay up without giving them a nudge in the right direction". There follows a list of ways in which the nudge may be administered. The basic dishonesty of the book is that, if you did try to be like these knowing children, you would in fact be playing the grown-ups game. The book is written by them, and for them. Just as the *Madcap of the Fourth* turned out in the end to be the saviour of the honour of the school, so these odious uppity children will turn out to be the saviours of middle class conformity; and that is the purpose of the book. I seriously doubt, moreover, whether six-year-olds would find it funny. Children of that age are not able to be sufficiently detached from their own lives to think of themselves as members of a class or kind. If they love stories, it is because they identify the characters with themselves or imagine what it would be like to be that individual person. They are not yet even amateur or part-time sociologists.

The teenagers for whom the other two books are designed are certainly capable of identifying with their age-group, and their problems are real enough. Miriam Stoppard's book has the great advantage of a perfectly explicit title. It is, and is meant to be, primarily about sex. It has good, clear anatomical drawings, and even in the other pictures the people look human. She starts with the questionnaire she sent out to a number of teenagers, and she quotes extensively from their answers. There is therefore the reassuring sense that what she says comes as much from her potential readership as from herself. It is easily imaginable that teenagers will read this book; and even if they do not, their contemporaries that they have for the past few years will be able to read it. The sexual advice, too, is geared to those whose problems with the opposite sex are confined to the questions about how to avoid spending

Handing out good advice

Mary Warnock

PETER MAYLE AND ARTHUR ROBINS

Grown-ups and Other Problems
Muenich. £4.95.
0 333 32601 6

MIRIAM STOPPARD

Talking Sex
Collins. £4.95.
0 575 03150 6
Piccolo paperback £1.25.
0 330 26752 3

BILL STEWART

You and All the Others
Kestrel. £4.95.
0 7226 5689 0

These three books are all designed to give good advice. But how does one publish a book of advice? How can advice be made to do for everyone? In questions of personal relationships, unlike, say gardening or cooking, the advice may seem never to be quite or even nearly applicable to the individual. On such questions, advice must come to people one by one, after the whole complicated saga has been told. Who does not think herself unique, not a type or specimen, like everyone else? It is this conviction that explains the popularity of agony columns. We read them out of curiosity, to find out what other people are like. If the problem and its solution seem to have some reference to ourselves, then this is, itself, a private matter, to be decided by ourselves. We are not being type-cast.

It could be argued, then, that all these books, and others like them, are a waste of time and money; indeed they may be thought positively harmful. For even if you feel you are not the person to whom the advice is offered, you may like to pretend that you are. You may adapt your behaviour to fit the stereotype in the books.

This danger is most obviously relevant to the book by Peter Mayle and Arthur Robins. It is a real question who this book is meant to be for. Internal evidence suggests that it is designed ostensibly for six or seven-year-olds, readers, but not very fluent readers, who prefer large print and a lot of pictures. The sexual advice, too, is geared to those whose problems with the opposite sex are confined to the questions about how to avoid spending

time in their company. I can remember, at a slightly more advanced age, pretending to be pretty, jolly tomboy girls of Angela Brazil, or Dorita Fairlie Bruce, *Dimsie a Perfect Madcap of the Fourth* and so on. So I can imagine children playing the role of the 'joke', though anonymous, 'kids' in the Moyle and Robins gallery; plotting against grown-ups, spying through their strategems, exploiting them, playing one off against the other: "The nearest sources of money are your parents. They get it by working for it, and they probably give you a little each week to buy vital supplies like ice-cream and comics. But for real money - the kind that buys bicycles - you can't expect them to pay up without giving them a nudge in the right direction". There follows a list of ways in which the nudge may be administered. The basic dishonesty of the book is that, if you did try to be like these knowing children, you would in fact be playing the grown-ups game. The book is written by them, and for them. Just as the *Madcap of the Fourth* turned out in the end to be the saviour of the honour of the school, so these odious uppity children will turn out to be the saviours of middle class conformity; and that is the purpose of the book. I seriously doubt, moreover, whether six-year-olds would find it funny. Children of that age are not able to be sufficiently detached from their own lives to think of themselves as members of a class or kind. If they love stories, it is because they identify the characters with themselves or imagine what it would be like to be that individual person. They are not yet even amateur or part-time sociologists.

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not played down. Perhaps she underestimated the factor of embarrassment in talking about sex. It may be that teenagers want to; but, for many, the appropriate, non-sneering vocabulary is missing. Their parents, too, whom on the whole, Dr Stoppard is inclined to castigate for their reticence, may be more inhibited than she allows by the general sense that they are likely to be thought bossy and disapproving, even where that is not their intention. Also parents may be plagued by the question when to talk about sex; and this partly means how old should their children be when they talk, partly whether it should be over breakfast, or in some special setting... thus, on the one hand risking interruption just at the interesting bit, on the other, the atmosphere of the dreaded "private speak". Again perhaps she says too little about the sexless teenagers, not so few, whose problem is not how to manage their sexual experiences but how to manage the lack of them. The dreadful fear that they are too unattractive ever to get involved in any such thing, the absolute need, indeed, to be "attractive", these are not much discussed. There are, after all, tremendous pressures, not just from contemporaries (she talks of the competition) but from advertising, comics, sex-shops, pornographic videos, pop music, indeed the whole atmosphere of urban life. Nevertheless, even though it has omissions, it is a good, educative and kindly book.

Bill Stewart's book which is also kindly-disposed, covers the same ground. But it is so patronizing, so deliberately down-market, so careful to make no social assumptions that might offend, that the end result is to destroy confidence. The cover has a picture of an astonishingly ugly girl with a bottle of coke and an overturned plastic cup beside her to show that you and I too can have a lovely time at the Youth Club (and the illustrative parable of the girl on her first evening in the new district where she has come to live is nothing if not fast-moving, love at first sight and all). The discussion of the main emotions likely to upset personal relations (the four Morsiers) is naive and simplistic; there are some dogmatic assertions about infantile sexuality. It is, in short, a book to arouse all possible critical hackles. Perhaps there are people ignorant and innocent enough to find it useful; but it carries with it the unmistakable air of a lecture to the untalented hand-picked - nice, kind, sympathetic, for the handicapped (and so human) but not, I suspect, of much appeal to the teenager who has got beyond the birds and the bees.

Young scientists

F. W. Kellaway

PHILIP WATSON

Liquid Magic
0 416 24230 8
Light Fantastic
0 416 24240 5
Methuen/Walker. £3.95 each.

The enquiring mind of the primary school aged child takes a lot of satisfying. As Stevenson had it "The world is so full of a number of things". Books which help to answer some of the everlasting questions of the young about the wonderful things around them are therefore always a boon. In a particularly lively series of titles under a "Science Club" umbrella, two which deal with light and liquids offer a surprisingly large amount of accurate information (two more on air and motion are published at the end of this month). More important, that information is often educed from simple experimentation by the young readers themselves, rather than being set out didactically.

In the second book there are considerations of reflection and refraction, the spectrum and photography, and of light and energy. Technical terms are not dodged and, while attenuated definitions or explanations sometimes fail to suggest, let alone convey, the complete story, there is little that is misleading, or that might need to be unlearned when a later, more academic, scientific study is undertaken.

The "things to do" are sensibly selected, with instructions logically set out and including just about the right amount of guidance. Especially to be commended are the safety precautions contained in the notes (they appear fittingly in both books) on "laboratory procedure", "Danger and the need for cleanliness and tidiness", are properly emphasized.

But it is the application of inductive processes that has a special appeal. It is indeed arguable that it would be advantageous for this technique to be employed even more frequently. Sometimes, of course, it is necessary to tell the young reader what to look for, or what to expect to happen; more helpfully, the briefing for an experiment is detailed, but with the operator left to observe and deduce results. As an instance there is the

treatment of colour: advice on constructing a "whizzer wheel" (a disc in which segments are painted in the colours of the rainbow and spun to give the impression of white light) is followed by suitable associations of the primary red, green and blue to produce the secondary yellow, magenta and cyan, and then by the concept of filters. The reader is involved throughout in making and doing things, rather than just being told certain facts.

Similarly in the book about liquids there are simple but effective experiments involving, for example, surface tension and crystallography. In the former a "silver skier", made from aluminium foil, is placed upon water on to which a drop of washing-up liquid is placed and we are shown what happens. Then programmes for "growing" crystals introduce the well-known patterns and also include a recipe for making sugar-candy, in "a delicious experiment because you can eat the result". A chapter, "liquids to gas", on change of state brings in ideas of enzymes, bread-making and brewing; other sections cover osmosis, thermometry, preparing ice-olies, flotation and the chemistry of acids and alkalis. Throughout, the step-by-step instructions, with clear coloured illustrations, encourage participation, perception and inference. Inevitably, with such a wide range of topics in each forty-eight-page book, something has to be sacrificed. The science must be pruned to essentials related to the suggested practical exercises, with most ramifications omitted. Paradoxically, this could be one of the strengths of the series. The works are not intended to be textbooks, nor even school primers (though they might be eminently appropriate in a junior class). They are not written for adults. They are designed, and most successfully, to appeal to individual youngsters, or a few companions, who wish to enjoy themselves in an active way.

The Schools' Poetry Association has recently been formed in order to "support and promote the teaching of poetry in schools". A small advisory panel has been set up and the Association aims to produce a journal with reviews and articles, to publish teaching materials and to organize local poetry festivals and conferences. Details are available from David Orme, The Secretary, Schools' Poetry Association, c/o Twyford School, Winchester, Hants SO21 1NW.

School songs

Alan Blackwood

R. A. SMITH

Blue Bell Hill Games
Illustrated by David McKee
Kestrel. £4.95.
0 7226 5726 9

SYLVIA BARRATT and SHEENA HODGE

Tinder-Box: Sixty-six songs for children
A. and C. Black. £5.95.
0 7136 2170 2

Probably the most fruitful source of folk song and dance in Britain today is the playground, back street, or their own games. Radio, cinema, television, discs, cassettes, all the changes of the last twenty-five years none of these things seem to have impinged much, if at all, upon the traditional world of children's games, the ritualized rhymes, chants, incantations, often in the form of inspired doggerel ("Bertie made mackerel", the jumps, hops and as a skipping rope or a piece of chalk. The legends and phrases, tunes and our turn, keep them alive, help to change them, re-create them, in a thought or plan. It is the very essence of folk activity.

The compiler of *Blue Bell Hill Games* has named his book after the head teacher. He has followed in the footsteps of Bela Bartok, Cecil Sharp of Transylvania and the wilds of Cornwall, but simply by stepping into the shoes of the folk, and recording the songs of the playground and the street, he has created a most entertaining record.

he has set down, categorizing their games (skipping, twirl, clapping games, and so on), summarizing how they are played, setting down their verses and choruses, sometimes notating their musical rhythms. The pages are made more lively still with jaunty little drawings by David McKee that have a real playground feel about them. Attractive as it may be, I doubt if many children themselves will bother with the book. They, in a sense, are the true authors, and their interest is in playing the games, living them for the moment, not considering them as you might a collection of butterflies pinned to a board. For sociologists on the other hand, such a compilation will be meat and drink.

Of more practical value is *Tinder-Box*, a varied collection of over sixty

children's songs, drawn from all parts of the world, some in the time specifically composed. The arrangements, sometimes in separate melody line, are also simple. These are supplemented by chord signs for budding musicians (a quick guide to basic positions), and many have suggestions on how each song may include other instruments, such as recorder, drums, xylophone, tambourine. One demonstrates how hands and feet be used to enrich the performance. The book is primarily intended for teachers. It has large, easy-to-read landscape-format pages, bound in a soft but strong cover. A notepad, this, for the junior school or play room.

Cornish

For Lyn

The last message to come in
Was a rumouring over the wires
Of fences down on an island farm;
Add a girl carrying a lamp upstairs
Had seen a light far out, too far,
Winking back in answer.

Next morning, it was gone.
But not a breath of breeze would stir
The mild, salt-stiffened air,
Or flutter the handkerchieves held up by women
Who came not slowly in the stupid calm
With tiny flags drooping from one arm.
Uncertain if they'd won
Or if slow, they could surrender.

Alan Jenkins

The voice of the street

George Szirtes

WES MAGEE

All the Day Through
Evans. £4.95.
0 237 45597 8

Arguably the finest of anthologists this century was Walter de la Mare, a poet who is conspicuously missing from Wes Magee's *All the Day Through*. Conspicuously for this reader, that is, for whom *Peacock Pie* is a most superior collection of children's poems. But since reviews of anthologies are notoriously restricted to quibbling about omissions of a particular nature I will refrain from making too much noise about individual poems. There is, however, a point to be made about the tone of any anthology, and recently there has been a tendency for children's verse to carry the air of the street rather than the Hundred Acre Wood. This to some extent is to the good in that it concentrates on the colloquial and the immediate. When written by Kit Wright it is excellently readable. It is funny, true, and rhythmically memorable; furthermore it has a stream of innocence running beneath it that is wholly convincing. In lesser hands the "street" genre declines to an abject acceptance of madness, the world of "mere appearances" and childish paranoia. What runs beneath

this is a pop-Rousseauistic premise that the kids are all right and everyone else isn't.

All the Day Through, which gives us heart and worst (not quite enough of the best in my opinion), is a thematic anthology in that it traces a child's day from waking and breakfast, through school, the afternoon and evening, to night with its ghoulies and ghouls. Most poems do share the concept of the child as the much-put-upon noble savage. The book starts with "I woke up this morning" by Karla Kuskin which concentrates on the plight of the dear one as he faces the cruel impatience of the adult world. Brian Lee's "Bad dog" has the child yearning for the thrill of mud and blood enjoyed by his lost dog while adults merely threaten the errant boy with slow starvation. Gareth Owen's working-class schoolboy articulates his alienation in "Our school". There is something po-faced in these poems which becomes the mirror, image of old-fashioned improving verse.

Then there are the celebrations of normality which is fair enough if limited. "Drinking fountain" observes the fact that in public parks drinking fountains tend either to shoot up your nose or lie doggo. "What do you like to drink?" by Wes Magee himself is a five-verse list of things people collect. There are nonsense poems which like fireworks sometimes fail to go off (Tod Hughes' "My sister Jane" among them). My obvious unease about some poems here springs from the conviction

that adults pretending to be children tend to look more pedantic than childlike.

However there are worthwhile things as well, which, on the whole, tend to look and sound more like poetry. The anonymous playground chants certainly deserve a place here, and some excellent poems have wandered in from the adult world: Vernon Scamell's "The Apple-raid", Alan Brownjohn's "Parrot" (on a different level), R. S. Thomas' "The smile", John Cotton's "In the kitchen" and the splendid "From the classroom window" by John Walsh, where for once adult and child are united in mutual off-guard contemplation of some dark fir trees. Otherwise there are plenty of kids and not enough children. I miss the essentially normal child who can spend half an hour watching insects running between the cracks of playground concrete. Not very much here for him.

One distracting aspect of the book is the setting of the text in light and bold sans-serif which are very difficult to read. I take the point that these are the sort of letters teachers write on the blackboard, but not as small as this nor so close together. Next to the heavy ink illustrations the poem text floats off like clusters of tiny faint bubbles. This is, of course, a school, a school, and will have most effect when read aloud to a class, as Mr Magee, who is both a poet and a headmaster, will have intended.

KIDS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Frances Hawker and Bruce Campbell

A new full-colour series about children in other countries. The books describe the life-style of children who live in four different countries in Asia looking at their village, their homes, their culture and their religion. Each book has a lively text and superb photographs of the children in their native environment.

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Evans

commentary

The one running joke concerns the ignorance of anyone not directly concerned with the plot of everything that happens in the film. From the moment a cashier notices him, he barely complains that he has been left a tip: a Wheel of Fortune stall owner at a fairground gets an ice-cream in his ock as he is awarding a prize of plaster bust of Beethoven to a customer - the customer looks at it as if it falls to the counter and says to her husband with a shake of her head "we have one like that home." A lease director might have forced these incidents into some central theme of the heartlessness of modern life, or the impersonality of the city, but Jacques Beineix conducts them as a sequence of notes to be related rather than with each variation. Beineix has described himself as a choreographer, rather than a director, and he is right: he is more interested in pattern than in psychology or conflict or any sort of theme. And amid such proficient exact choreography there is a surprising unexpected humanity in the film: it is the beauty of the Diva's Voice as a catalyst for the whole story and the friendship Jules has with a Vietnamese girl and her omniscient boyfriend that ensures his survival.



to the editor

completely ephemeral and these same people would probably be mystified by the meaning of much of their conversation if confronted by it in later years.

Even if one urges the lexicographer to concern himself with this it is doubtful whether he could, inevitably the dictionary assigns importance to the printed word; it is after all a printed book itself. I doubt whether Roy Harris's awesome project of a "systematic analysis of the structures of communication in modern society" has anything to do with dictionaries or lexicographers.

PETER BENSON.

Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

Nabokov's 'Eugene Onegin'

Sir, — Dmitri Nabokov (Letters, September 3) has misunderstood what I said about his father's translation of *Eugene Onegin* in my discussion with the Russian poet David Kugultinov.

In that discussion I made a sharp distinction between Pushkin's training, and the language used by translators to convey it in English. In the published account of the talk, immediately before those sentences quoted by Mr Nabokov, I am recorded as saying: "I owe Nabokov a very great deal. His translation is a marvelous 'crib', conveying perfectly the sense of the novel. His notes on *Onegin* are scholarly and helpful in the highest degree." In fact, over since publishing my own translation of *Eugene Onegin* five years ago, I have emphasized my debt to Vladimir Nabokov. I have a great respect for him, both as a Russian scholar and (except in his translation of *Onegin*) as a writer of English.

But Mr Nabokov challenges me to

produce a few examples of "Nabokovian fantasy", so I will do so. Here are a number of words, chosen at random, which seem to me to be fantastic in the sense, not that they misrepresent Pushkin's meaning — they don't — but that their quirky, unnecessary distracts the reader's attention away from Pushkin, and makes him think about Nabokov and his strange choice of language: *preconizing* (1 LX); *devoiment* (1 LX); *autitude* and *juventude* (6 XLIV); *dolent* (7 LXIX).

Then there is the odd case of the "shotman". When Tatiana falls in love with Onegin (3 XI), Pushkin compares her to a shivering hare who has spied far off a marksmen (*sroekoi*) crouching in the bushes. In Nabokov's version this character becomes the *shotman*. I looked the word up, in as heavy as possible an edition of the *OED*, and consulted other lexical authorities; finally I learned that, among other things, a shotman is one who fires the explosive charge in a Cornish tin-mine. I have met Cornish tin-miners in Australia and other parts of the world — but this seems a bit far-fung even for a "cousin Jack". What, I ask myself, what the devil is this Cornishman doing here, crouching in the bushes in the middle of the Government of Pskov? If that isn't fantasy, I don't know what is.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.

32 Kingston House South, London SW7.

'Edmund Ironside'

Sir, — Eric Sams (August 13) bases his claim for Shakespearean authorship of *Edmund Ironside* on three main contentions: that the manuscript in which the play survives is authentic and in Shakespeare's hand; that the play strikingly anticipates

phrases from several of Shakespeare's earlier plays; and that the date of composition must be before 1589 (so that the Shakespearean parallels cannot be interpreted as echoes). He would appear to be mistaken on all counts.

Eleanor Boswell, who edited the play for the Malone Society in 1927, showed in her introduction that the manuscript must be a scribal copy. The hand shows none of the characteristics of the authentic signatures of Shakespeare or of the celebrated "Hand D" pages in *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (for does Sams ever refer to the extensive descriptive analyses of that hand by Sir E. Maunde Thompson, which were in print in time to have enabled Eleanor Boswell to identify the hand of *Ironside* as Shakespeare's? She found grounds for so doing).

The use of parallel passages in authorship investigations has always had one crippling drawback: unless the date of both texts is certain, either could be the borrower. When Sams points out phrases from a single memorable speech in *Richard II* scattered throughout *Ironside*, it is hard to resist the thought that *Ironside* may be the debtor. The date of *Edmund Ironside* is not certain: the paper and the hand combine to suggest merely that, in Eleanor Boswell's words, "It might have been written at any time within a generation or so before or after 1600". The Bishop of London did not, *pace* Mr Sams, become licensee of plays in 1589; he had already been responsible for the licensing of printed plays since 1586, if not 1559, and the licensing of scripts for performance was the business of the Master of the Revels from at least 1579.

The attempt to present William Lambard's *Archeionomia* (1568) as a source for *Ironside* involves inaccuracies as well as implausibility. Canute's laws, which occupy sixty of the book's 284 pages, are hardly its "chief contents". Nor did Canute's laws impose mutilation as a source of infamy. In context, the words of Lambard's *Archeionomia* (1568) as a source for *Ironside* involve inaccuracies as well as implausibility.

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V. Nabokov, *Transparent Things*, chapter 3.

2 I own my first sensations, as soon as I was left solitary and alone in my own chamber in the hotel, were far from being so flattering as I had prefigured them. I walked up gravely to the window in my dusty black coat, and looking through the glass saw all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure. The old with broken bones, and in helmets which had lost their vizards, the young in armour bright which shone like gold, belated with each gay feather of the east, all — all — lifting at it like fated knights in tournaments of yore for fame and love.

L. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*.

3 The hotel occupies an attractive and isolated site overlooking the famous lake. It is said to be the deepest lake in the world. In fact, either it is an ordinary large blue lake, or something beyond description. If these travel notes are to be effective and useful, they must make up my mind about such things and fairly soon. The manager's living room relayed this proverb to me: over breakfast the people of the capital know the famous lake better than the people of The Famous Lake (town about five miles across from the hotel) — which may not be clear to the armchair visitor, unless he understands that the lake went dry the year the hotel was built, drunk up (as water supply) by the thirty citizens of the capital.

Stanley Crawford, *Travel Notes*.

Competition No 84
Winner: William Blackwith
Answers:

1 Ho knew the hotel to be antiquated but this was overdoing it. The belle chambre au quatrième, although

teine noble men of this realm, for assurance of their fidelities, should have their noses slit, and their ears stuffed, or (as some say) their hands and noses cut off."

Edmund Ironside is a play of real interest. Its leading character, Earl Edrike, is a double-dyed traitor in the tradition of Shakespeare's Richard of Gloucester in the third part of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. Like 3 *Henry VI*, *Ironside* ends with a hollow truce and promises a sequel. This would no doubt have included the death of Edmund, though whether or not "as he sat on a pile to do the necessities of nature" (as some of Hollishead's sources assert) we shall never know. Other predictable events for the next play would be the death of the traitorous Edrike and the politically advantageous marriage of Canute to Emma, widow of King Ethelred.

In style, manner and energy, especially with its comic characters, *Ironside* recalls not so much Shakespeare as another history play of unknown authorship and dispute date, *Thomas of Woodstock* or *The First Part of King Richard II*. The two plays have survived in the same collection of manuscripts; both seem to echo Shakespeare's *Richard II*; and both show signs of having been revived in the second or third decade of the seventeenth century. Mr Sams is surely right in supposing that *Ironside* belongs to the late years of the sixteenth century, but 1595-99 might seem likelier limits for its composition than before 1589. It is a pity that he pushes his other claims for the play so far.

What I don't understand is why the writers of the article (and those who they cite) complain when the public is presented with two versions of the text and left to choose for itself which it wishes to buy.

BRIAN FINNEY.

15 Belsize Park, London NW1.

RICHARD PROUDFOOT.

Department of English, King's College, London, Strand, London WC2.

Aspects of Copyright

Sir, — As an editor of one of Penguin's recent Lawrence volumes to be published since normal copyright lapsed and of a forthcoming volume for Cambridge University Press in which a new copyright is established, I feel that Michael Holroyd's and Sandra Jobson's well-informed article, "Copyrights and wrongs: D. H. Lawrence" (September 3), is slightly misleading.

Normal readers and scholars alike are unlikely to find themselves now or in the future restricted to using the Cambridge texts, whatever interpretation Gerald Pollinger would like to place on current copyright law and no matter how often Cambridge University Press reiterates that the old

texts ought to disappear from the market. Apart from any other consideration, the old texts will be inferior to the new ones. Only in such rare cases as *Apocalypse* where very substantial new matter has been added to the text would it seem unproductive to reprint the old text (and presumably my fellow-editors who have worked for both Cambridge and Penguin) would not have undertaken to edit these old texts if we considered them too corrupt to be worth perpetuating. On the other hand the Cambridge edition is an improvement, sometimes dramatic, more often less so, on what we have had to date.

Without the establishment of a new copyright the Cambridge edition would not have been commercially feasible. This, it seems to me, is a fair reason for establishing a new copyright. However, I reject the writers' surprising suggestion that academic writers should be awarded second-class authors and awarded reduced royalties. The idea of our publications "may well earn money through academic tenure and promotion" is something of a joke in the universities' current and foreseeable plight.

What I don't understand is why the writers of the article (and those who they cite) complain when the public is presented with two versions of the text and left to choose for itself which it wishes to buy.

BRIAN FINNEY.

15 Belsize Park, London NW1.

RICHARD PROUDFOOT.

Department of English, King's College, London, Strand, London WC2.

Sir, — Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson conclude their interesting article (September 3) with a few pithy remarks about "copyright chaos" arising from the shortcoming in 1982 — of the Copyright Act of 1956. Successive governments have hurried their heads in the sands of copyright, while illegal activities (video piracy, multiple photocopying, private recording etc) have

The Whitford Committee, produced a comprehensive report in 1977. It was not until July 1981 that the government produced a much less comprehensive Consultative Document entitled "Copyright: A Debate". This debate has gone on for long enough: what is needed is action. If the government does not move quickly and forcefully its white elephant.

MARK LE FANU.

Society of Authors, 84 Doughty Gardens, London SW10.

Among this week's contributors

KINSLAY AMIS's most recent novel is *Russian Hide and Seek*, 1980.

HAROLD BEAVER is Professor of English at the University of Amsterdam.

T. J. BRYON's novel *Swan Song* will be published shortly.

ANTHONY BLUNT is completing a monograph on the architectural oeuvre of Pietro de Cortona.

ALAN BROWNHOFF's most recent collection of poems, *A Night in the Gazebo*, was published in 1981.

MICHAEL BUTLER is Senior Lecturer in German at the University of Birmingham.

PATRICK CANNON is the author of *Faust as Muleman: A Study of Thomas Mann's novel 'Doctor Faustus'*, 1973.

MAURICE CHIBNALL is the editor of *The Ecological History of Orkney: Volume One*, 1982.

JAMES CLIFFORD's *Person and Myth* will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

RICHARD COOKS is the editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Bulletin*.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM's anthology *The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse* was published last year.

GORDON DONALDSON's books include *Scottish Kings*, 1977.

J. B. DONNE is the translator of Gauguin's *Noo Noa*, 1980.

HUBERT L. DREYFUS is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley.

JAMES FENTON is Theatre Critic of the *Sunday Times*.

VALERIE FRASER is a lecturer in the Department of Art at the University of Essex.

SHIRLEY HAZZARD was a member of the United Nations staff from 1952 to 1962. Her *Defeat of an Ideal: A Study of the Self-Destruction of the United Nations* was published in 1973.

HAROLD HOBSON is an Honorary Fellow of Ortel College, Oxford.

A. L. LOEB is Senior Lecturer and Curator of the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University.

JOHN LUCAS is the editor of *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy*, 1979.

ADAM MARS-JONES's collection of stories *Lonely Lectures* has recently won the Somerset Maugham Prize.

MICHAEL NEVE is a lecturer in the History of Medicine at University College London.

BLAKE NEVINS's books include *Cooper's Landscapes: An Essay on the Picturesque Vision*, 1976.

RICHARD OSBORNE is writing a book of Rossini.

NICHOLAS PHILLIPSON is co-editor with Rosalind Milobolov, of *Scandal in the Age of Improvement*, 1970.

PAUL QUARRIE is the Librarian of Eton College Library.

CHRISTOPHER REID's most recent collection of poems, *Pea Soup*, will be published later this month.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

ROBERT WISTRICH's *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* was published earlier this year.

The Dasein as a whole

Hubert L. Dreyfus

MARTIN HEIDEGGER.

The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. 396pp. Indiana University Press. \$16.50. 0 253 17685 7

When *Being and Time* burst upon the philosophical scene in 1927 it seemed to drop out of the blue. Why, in the heartland of neo-Kantian and phenomenological epistemology was Heidegger asking a seemingly empty and unmotivated question concerning the meaning of being? Only his own students, many of whom like Heidegger himself had grown up with Husserl's phenomenology, were in a position to understand. Now, thanks to the publication of his 1927 course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, we can place the ontological orientation of *Being and Time* in its philosophical context.

In Albert Hofstadter's excellent translation, we can listen in as Heidegger clearly and patiently explains why one must deconstruct traditional epistemological concern with the relation of subjective content to transcendent object in the name of a distinction, never before made in philosophy, which he calls the ontological difference.

The students in Heidegger's course on phenomenology would have been familiar with Husserl's latest work, *Ideas*, 1914, in which Husserl developed his analysis of the intentional content of mental states, began in *Logical Investigations*, 1900, into a total account of the structure of the meanings by which a transcendental subject purports to refer to any sort of object whatsoever.

Husserl argued that since our mental contents our desires, beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, etc.—can be studied regardless of whether they successfully refer to things. Indeed, of whether the notion of reference to mind-independent objects even makes sense, the phenomenologist can remain neutral as to reference, and simply study the structure of sense immanent in consciousness. This crucial methodological move, in which Husserl "suspended" the "natural attitude" in order to reflect on its intentional content, was called "bracketing existence". But, once we start talking about intentional content the most we can conclude is that our mental content purports to refer to independent referents, not that there are any such referents, or even whether there is anything more to *being* independently real than to be so taken.

The question how directio sense, the understanding of being, belongs to intention, and how intention itself is possible as this necessary reference, is not only unanswered in phenomenology but not even asked.

Heidegger's basic problem is how reference to mind-independent entities is possible. He takes a running start by approaching the question historically, critically investigating why, for Kant, existence is not a predicate but, rather, "absolute position"; what, for the Scholastics, constitutes the difference between essence and existence; and how, according to Aristotle, Hobbes, J. S. Mill and Lotze, assertions refer to objects. The discussion returns to the present with a quotation from *Ideas* in which Husserl accepts uncritically the "most radical of all distinctions of being — being as consciousness and being as being that 'manifests' itself in consciousness, 'transcendent' being". After a "phenomenological clarification" of the problems raised by these earlier thinkers, Heidegger concludes that violence is practiced on the Dasein [human being] by preconceived notions of ego and subject drawn from the theory of knowledge. Indeed, "what is called immanence to theory of knowledge is a complete inversion of the phenomenological facts...". His point is that human beings are not basically ego-subjects with mental states which are directed toward objects in the world. They are, indeed, *sometimes* correctly described as having private mental states, but they are always, and thus more basically, a kind of concerned activity which is inseparable from a public world in which every sort of object (tools, nature, people,

numbers, etc.) can be manifest and directly encountered. In this natural everyday activity, which Husserl mischaracterized as an intentional attitude, "Self and world belong together in the single entity, the Dasein. Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object, or like I and thou, but self and world are the basic determination of the Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world."

Heidegger gives a concise summary of his argument, which, of course, needs a lot of explaining.

To intentionality, as comportment towards beings, there always belongs an *understanding of the being of those beings to which the intention refers*. . . . This understanding of the being of beings is connected with the *understanding of world*, which is the presupposition for the experience of an intrawordly being. But, now, since world-understanding is at the same time an *understanding of itself by the Dasein* . . . the understanding of being that belongs to intentionality embraces the Dasein's being. . . .

The question now becomes: What does Heidegger mean by the understanding of the being of beings and the understanding of world and how are they supposed to be related to each other and to Dasein?

We will never get an answer if we try to map Heidegger on to what we already take for granted as sensible philosophy. Heidegger, admired Aristotle as "the last of the great philosophers who had eyes to see and the courage and tenacity to force inquiry back to the phenomena. . . .". His idea of phenomenology, unlike Husserl's, was to stop ringing changes on the trusted notions of immanent and transcendent, conscious and unconscious, implicit and explicit, reflective and unreflective, subject and object, and get back to everyday experience. Heidegger is definitely not saying what Sir Peter Strawson, in his *New York Review of Books* review of George Stokoe's Heidegger book, rather condescendingly finds "plausible", viz. that we each have an "unreflective and largely unconscious grasp of the basic general structure of interconnected concepts or categories in terms of which we think about the world and ourselves". This would be to make our understanding of being and of the world a belief system entertained by a subject, exactly the view Husserl held, which turns reality into a correlate of our conceptual scheme. Pouring ontological wine into epistemological bottles, Strawson's gloss makes Heidegger's concern with being seem "perfectly general" and thus amenable only to "formal or trivial answers, however portentous we may be tempted to make them sound".

But, even granting his rejection of epistemology, what could Heidegger mean by our understanding of being if not some very general assumptions about reality? We must return to the lectures.

To explain the understanding of the being of beings which constitutes the self and world as a single entity, Heidegger begins by describing the classroom, contrasting his approach with Fichte's (a possible stand-in for Husserl):

The ontological distinction between res cogitans and res extensa, between ego and non-ego, cannot in any way be conceived directly and simply, as for instance in the form that Fichte uses to initiate the problem when he says: "Gentlemen, block the wall, and then think the one who thinks the wall." There is already a constructive violation of the facts, an epistemological violation, in the request "Think the wall." For in our natural comportment towards things we never think a single thing, and whenever we seize upon it expressly for itself we are taking it out of the contexture to which it belongs in its real content; wall, room, surroundings. . . . Sitting here in the auditorium, we do not in fact apprehend walls — not unless we are getting bored. Nevertheless, the walls are already present: even before we think them as objects.

The "equipmental whole" Heidegger is describing is "non-conceptually understandable". Our understanding of it is not a theory, or a set of beliefs about how things will behave, but a set of interrelated skills, a kind of know-how. "In Germany we say that someone can *vorstellen* something. . . . This is equivalent to saying that he *versieht* such dasein [understands in the sense of being skilled or expert at it, has the know-how of it]. The meaning of the term *vorstellen* [Verstehen] as defined above is intended to go back to this usage in ordinary language."

What makes particular entities intelligible, then, is not our thoughts — Husserl's intentional contents — but our shared skills for coping with things in a shared context which Heidegger calls the world. As socialized into these public skills and practices we are this world prior to knowing about particular things and even prior to using them: "The world, within which . . . beings are encountered, is . . . always already world which the one shares with the other . . . because the Dasein is antecedently constituted as being-in-the-world. . . ."

Heidegger's response to Kant and Husserl is, in effect, that if one supposes that realism is a *peiti* or a thesis or a presupposition of our conceptual scheme, one is doomed to epistemological scepticism (we can never know if the thesis is correct) and worse, to transcendental idealism (all that realism could ever come to is our thesis plus whatever we decide to count as its confirmation). We can avoid these conclusions only by giving up the view that *all* our experience is mediated by intentional content. We must, therefore, abandon the Husserlian dogma that our relation to the world is *exhaustively* captured in terms of a subject perceiving, believing, making assumptions, etc., about objects and their contexts. We have to ask, rather, about the conditions of possibility of this whole Cartesian, intentionalist account.

Heidegger claims that we can encounter objects as real (manipulate them, perceive them, avoid them, etc.) only on the basis of discriminations, reactions, manners of coping, etc., which cannot be analysed in terms of explicit and implicit intentional content.

The equipmental contexture stands at first, completely unthought and unthoughtful. . . . "Unthought" means that it is not thematically apprehended for deliberate thinking about things; instead, in circumspection, we find our bearings in regard to them. . . .

When we enter here through the door, we do not apprehend the seats, and the same holds for an environs, a surroundings, which contains within itself a closed, intelligible contexture. Our pragmatic activity is structured as purposive (though not necessarily in terms of intentionalist goals), we are over that which is already given (although not necessarily remembered) in a current context (which we take account of without necessarily noticing). In Heideggerian terms: "The temporality of dealing with equipment is retentive-expectant apprehending (Gegenwärtigen)". For this temporal openness, which is his "more original conception of intentionality", Heidegger takes over from the tradition the name "transcendence".

"The Dasein . . . in its being is out there to *understand* itself from a world." He can then conclude:

[Husserl] intentionally is founded in the Dasein's transcendence. . . . Transcendence cannot, however, be explained in terms of . . . traditional accounts of intentionality. The Dasein is intentional only because it is determined essentially by temporality. What is harder to understand is Heidegger's attempt to show that this temporality (Zeitlichkeit) is in itself grounded in an even more primordial three-dimensional openness which he calls *Temporality* (translated, out of desperation, as *Temporality* with a

capital "T"). In other words, Heidegger wants to show that the temporality of the understanding of the being of equipment is grounded in the Temporality of the understanding of being itself. Just as temporality is supposed to be the structure of everyday, local, pragmatic activity. Temporality (with a capital "T") is supposed to be the structure of the background, or world "upon which" such activity takes place. This ultimate structure must account for the possibility of practical understanding and so must be structurally similar to (but not identical with) the temporal structure of pragmatic activity; yet it must also leave open the possibility of all other kind of activity as well. What this most basic structure is, remains, in spite of Heidegger's sincere and heroic efforts, almost totally incomprehensible.

This may not be the reader's fault, however. As Heidegger admits:

Faulty interpretations of transcendence, of the basic relationship of the Dasein to beings and to itself, are no mere defects of thought or acumen. They have reason and their necessity in the Dasein's own historical existence. Without knowing where the faulty interpretation lies, we can be quietly persuaded that there is also a faulty interpretation concealed within the Temporal interpretation of being as such, and again no arbitrary one.

As Wittgenstein saw, laying out the structure of the background is well-nigh impossible. It soon became obvious that Temporality was too closely tied to the structure of equipment to account for our ability to encounter other entities such as natural things and works of art. Heidegger spent the rest of his life trying to work out the topology of what he called clearing, the open, we regioning, etc. On the way he abandoned his early account of temporality as a too metaphysical. What remains central in his thought to the end, however, is the fundamental difference between the world, clearing, or background of shared historical linguistic practices — on the one hand, and mental states and their objects, on the other. At the end of *Basic Problems* Heidegger calls this basic difference the ontological difference and claims it as his contribution to philosophy. He remarks that "the distinction between reality and existence, or between essence and existence, does not coincide with the ontological difference but belongs on the side of one member of the ontological difference". All the problems of traditional epistemology, culminating in Husserl's phenomenology, come from failing to see this distinction, and failing to sort out the complex structures of the background practices which embody our understanding of every sort of object. Thus we see that the ontological difference is not as simple . . . as it appears in its plain formulation, but that ontology aims at, at that which *differ* here, being itself, reveals an ever richer structure within itself. . . . What might at first seem an empty and unmotivated fascination with being, is in fact Heidegger's attempt to call attention to the complex unity and intelligibility of our shared background practices, and to show their importance for philosophy.

How could human behaviour be described? Surely only by showing the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. Not what one man is doing now, but the whole hurly-burly, is the background against which we see an action. . . .

Heidegger, however, claims to find the unifying structure of world, and indeed, of all intelligibility in the structure of temporality. This is the most difficult and also the most dubious aspect of his early work. In Part II of *Basic Problems* (as in Division II of *Being and Time*) he seeks to lay out the topological structure of our comportment towards beings and to ground this in the ultimate horizon of what he calls primordial temporality, which is supposed to be the structure of understanding itself and account for "the immediate unity of the understanding of being and comportment towards beings".

The first move is relatively easy to follow. The equipmental totality is not a jumbled heap of things but an environs, a surroundings, which contains within itself a closed, intelligible contexture. Our pragmatic activity is structured as purposive (though not necessarily in terms of intentionalist goals), we are over that which is already given (although not necessarily remembered) in a current context (which we take account of without necessarily noticing). In Heideggerian terms: "The temporality of dealing with equipment is retentive-expectant apprehending (Gegenwärtigen)". For this temporal openness, which is his "more original conception of intentionality", Heidegger takes over from the tradition the name "transcendence".

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The lists of affection

Valentine Cunningham

JULIAN SYMONS
Critical Observations
213pp. Faber, £9.75.
0 591 11688 4

What manner of man ought a critic to be? What manner of critic a man? The photo on the dust jacket of *Critical Observations* catches Julian Symonds appropriately surrounded by works of art, the critic among paintings, but also backed into the corner of some room—for all the world as if he'd been hustled into this spot by some flushed interlocutor eager to know the answer to those basic critical and moral questions. And Symonds's expression is an impressive mixture. It's kind, but it's also as tough as can be, the look of someone shrewd and unflusterable, alert, canny, nobody's fool, a weigher of replies, flitting so, one feels, for the enquirers that face looks as if it's confronting the ones this collection of critical pieces and memorabilia keeps asking—not least of its own author's practices—as it meditates on literature and literary people and prowls continually about the doings of Symonds's important critical contemporaries—the monstrous Wyndham Lewis, the Reverend T. S. Eliot, billhooking Grigson and comradely Leavis, anarchizing George Woodcock and the Stalizing crew of *Left Review*.

No questions, this book implies, deserve more serious pondering. What helps keep the critical writing of Julian Symonds so attractive, though, is that he's never been free to let seriousness collapse into mere dullness. Like Walter Allen and V. S. Pritchett, critics he often reminds one of, he has lived frankly in the marketplace. He himself has drugged—wading through some eight books a day, he says, for his own great book on the crime story, editing, writing, crime stories, putting in years to the fiction-reviewing mill—and he sympathizes with others for whom the literary life has meant pressed labour, honourable drudgery like his namesake Arthur Symonds (trying "by reviews, articles, and books done to order, to support" himself and his spendthrift wife in "flats at Malda Vale and St John's Wood, and then in cottage at Wittersham in Kent"). Dullness, as the hard-pressed man of letters has been led, by the bare route, is an unaffordable luxury. Instead, liveliness has become one of Symonds's most natural critical criteria.

He comes down hard on *Left Review*, stupidly blinding itself for ideological reasons, he argues, to the dull tosh most of the proletarian writers it encouraged were producing. (He picks out a marvellously killing opening sentence: "Muffled in an old overcoat, bought at Paddy's rag market, Lawrence, the old beggar, sat shivering in his dockside lodging in Liverpool, coughing his life away and drinking himself to death.") The *Criterion* had plenty of terminal sickness about it but among its illia, Symonds feels, was its critics' willful boring of readers. "On the critical side . . . the magazine looks now most dismally old-fashioned and uninteresting . . . Almost every issue contains some long, stiffly dull article on the evolution of English blank verse, the poetry of Rossetti, the scansion of Shakespeare." Meanwhile, however, the youthful Symonds was revealing the zealous eye for a main chance that would keep *Twentieth Century Verse* afloat without a press baroness's money by getting his copies of the *Criterion* for nothing—"by asking Fabers for sample book numbers, which they supplied for the cost of postage".

A disconcerting practice of my youth," he calls that to do. But like his insistence that readers are people who also need amusement this strikes one actually as an instance of rather commendable realism. Symonds can't always arrange for dullness never to encroach on his writing—who can?—but at least this telling realism never flags. Characteristically, he is impatient of a critic like Arthur Symonds who tends "to refer any actual work back to theory". That's why he is so hostile to *Left Review* for praising

had prose because of its correct working-class tones, lauding windy poems because they were about Stalin, dispraising Pasternak at the behest of mere Party lines, and so on. And it's also why Symonds stands as a constant adversary of all those New and ever Newer Critics who would stake out for writing a bounded space free of intervention from social events, somehow distant from people's lives (including writers' lives), from history and politics. He quotes with approval Dashiell Hammett's assertion that "The contemporary novelist's job is to take pieces of life and arrange them on paper. And the more direct their passage from street to paper the more lifelike they should turn out." He relishes the physical grasp of Frances Newman's writing ("an almost oppressive sense of sexual pleasure in 'physical contact'") and of Simonson's—in which "close emotional contact almost always implies physical expression the image of the crowded train with bodies rubbing against each other is a fitting one."

Like Hammett, Symonds is forever measuring a writer's work against street and bodies, for him the knowable realities. A Londoner, an urban man himself, he responds sympathetically to Henry Crane's fascinated way with the metonymies of modernity, "automats, the cinema, skyscrapers, radio antennae, subway, dandruff advertisements, traffic lights". He quotes with feeling a letter from his friend Ruthven Todd that is laden with yearning to tread again the American city pavements, to grip America once more: "I want to have a past in the city, I want to see the Square in Boston and the Italian Market the other side of the tracks. I want the smell of Bleeker Street." Fall in Robert Frost's and Emily Dickinson's Amherst was clearly something outstanding to attract "an incorrigible city-dweller" such as Symonds. But then, as he rightly describes Amherst in his piece "A Year in Academe" about visiting Amherst College as a writer in residence, the place is really a little *urbis in rure*, not at all short on the urban provisions Symonds needs. In particular big libraries: an eight minute walk up College Hill . . . to the splendid Robert Frost Library instead of a half-hour journey to the London Library. "What Amherst lacked in the end, however, was enough people for Symonds's taste—after all he was glad when he got back to his namesake's thronging London ("here, in the molly Strand, among these burring people").

Crowds, the peopled streets: like Poe's Man of the Crowd (and Symonds touches very nicely here on the writing of his most understanding little book on Poe in that same Robert Frost Library), like Poe's crowd-hugger, Symonds keeps returning to the indefeasible givenness of bodies, the blunt fact of human physicality. It is, of course, the "shock" (as he calls it) of the corpse which grants his own and other people's crime fiction their powerful tug on the real.

These preferences do have a traceable source. They go back to the inter-war years in which Symonds began as a critic and editor and started writing his crime stories—the period when the writings of Joyce, Eliot and Woolf had been predicated a future of streets choked by the unarguably cruel realities of the cadaver. Symonds is a 1930s man, shaped by that chaotic time when the world had gone, in Wyndham Lewis's phrase, all "crime club". Symonds is, of course, one of the most memorable recollers of that period. His *Thirties* remains the best single account of the decade. And here, as elsewhere, he returns us to the 1930s as to the most real time of his life. "During the thirties," in the "thirties," "in those days," he's always getting to his feet as a chief witness. He knows what the *Criterion* and *Left Review* stood for in their day because it was his days well. Mention Bert Marshall and he'll remind you of a when, "every-

Herbert was a Bert", prole for political reasons. Reviewing Kingsley Amis's pastiche thriller *The Riverside Villas Murder*, he can testify to the accuracy of its 1930s touches, point out its acquired tricks "of the time". The Thirties connection others might miss, he will spot—such as the origins of Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* sequence in a feeling its author had in a Marseilles street on New Year's Day, 1935.

Symonds is thoroughly aware of the dangers of a critic's using touchstones too rigidly. He doesn't like, for instance, the too-narrow list of Leavis's preferred authors and books. He also points out the perils of living as long as Arthur Symonds did, of falling tiredly victim to tastes formed in too distant past. But having measured the possible pitfalls he persists in deploying the 1930s as a test, in checking people out by their response to "what was not only a period in time, but also a way of thinking and feeling", "a self-contained movement involving a very particular use of language". And who would complain about this? Symonds makes it seem only fitting when he wonders of Frances Newman's work how it would have got on in "the chilling climate of the thirties", or points out that Snow's *The Masters* "is set in 1937, a time of deep student concern about politics in general and about the Spanish Civil War in particular, but such matters are not mentioned in the book". Symonds persuades one to agree that the 1930s issues, the period's certain kind of connect literature with a certain kind of politics, still matter, that it's apt to measure a writer's quality by what he did, and what he now does with, that formative decade.

What Symonds himself did most of in the Thirties, critically speaking, was to run his little magazine *Twentieth Century Verse* and run about with a bunch of anarcho-leftists such as George Woodcock, Roy Fuller and Ruthven Todd. These were chaps, like Symonds himself, who weren't in any of the Oxford and Cambridge sets, who were marginals of the literary world and placeable with certainty as neither *Left Review*'s nor *Scrutiny*'s, neither *New Verse*'s men. In that world of factions and the house organs of factions it didn't count, say, simply to sing the Internationale—even to sing it on a tube-train, as Symonds reports that he and Woodcock once did. It mattered more in whose name you sang it. The *Twentieth Century Verse* party preferred its own tones and accent. To be sure, they admired and to an extent imitated Grigson's backing and blood-sucking in *New Verse*, his vaillant-for-truth, incorruptibly harsh stance. But they admired still more Grigson's patron saint, Wyndham Lewis, who was even more passionately lonely and defiant. And those 1930s preferences are still, it appears, ones that Symonds owns. He still professes to admire Wyndham Lewis. He's still defending here Grigson's keenness to irritate and draw blood—and long after Grigson himself has publicly disowned his billhook. He warns still to *Scrutiny*'s waving of interest in polite critical exchanges. He has no time for any comfortable monger of orthodoxies, on left or right.

He quotes with enthusiasm Mrs Leavis's sneer about the literary world's inheriting insiders, all those "odious little boys" from the right schools who oil their moneyed and privileged way "in a body up to the universities to become pretentious young men, and, still essentially unchanged, from there move into the literary quarters vacated by the last batch of their kind".

No one, I suppose, has more living acquaintance with the field of little magazines than Symonds. There's not likely to be anyone anywhere to touch him when it comes to measuring, say, the precise quality of George Woodcock's *Now* ("much the best periodical of a radical kind in England" between 1944 and 1947) or to manoeuvring knowledgeably among the likes of the *Nick Carter Weekly*, *Detective Story Magazine*, *Black Mask* or *Dime Detective Magazine*. It's no surprise at all to find that his Amherst days were spiced with good things he'd found in the *Amherst Student*. And, evidently, Symonds believes that the little magazine, the more like a righteously narrow, self-consciously dissenting sect, the better. No wonder *Poetry Norton Review* is more or less his current ideal. If only, he complains, there weren't so few of that kind. But, he suggests, the easy glossiness of the colour magazines has come in to usurp and corrupt energies that critically bristled publications would once have been able to deploy. Symonds evinces no surprise that Ian Hamilton's *Review* didn't expand successfully into the lush numbers of the Arts Council-backed *New Review*. As for the *New Statesman*, a financially successful paper (as it was when he wrote about it in the early 1960s), it earns the strongest of snubs ("champion endorser of reputations just established . . . its collected volumes are a reference book in which is intellectually in or out at a given time"). To sell out, you have to have sold out.

This continuing unyielding probity, the steadily pursued inerrancy, which Symonds has managed to maintain amidst all the pressures of the marketplace—gives his work the magnetism of an ingenuously high moral tone. But this is not the only aspect of his critical handling that attracts. There is also the determined boyishness of his tests for the unacceptable subject—a feel for the naughtily provoking that, in Symonds's generation, also marks the adult work of Auden and F. W. Bateson. "You don't," Symonds was amused to discover in Amherst, "talk about sex, but discuss male-female relationships." Symonds talks bluntly about sex. He scorns the mealy-mouthed Leavis who spoke of *Lady Chatterley* "strongly distasteful sexual detail. He can't be stopped, on this as on other occasions, from rejoicing in details about paedophilia. Larkin and other young poets at the Fortune Press. He dived happily on what appears to have been the first transvestite crime story (*Sudden Death* by B. C. Skottowe). He contemplates with interest Simonson's non-stop sex life and his desire as a writer to "penetrate humanity". "Erections".

Loss

Here in this hotel room half across the world—
The air languid; the bathroom
Shiny as a new tooth—
Pain floods in at last.

No one ever did all they could:
And all we did was not enough
For you. Why couldn't you go sooner—
Go when the going was good?

Not too soon. Not when you were all-powerful.
A parent owes it to a child to be in keeping:
First present them distant, and finally
Absent. But all without screaming.

Connie Bensley

Symonds regrets, speaking in reference to one out from the edition of Hommet's *The Way* "did not at that time exist in the novel".

That they do now is no doubt part to Symonds's critical enthusiasm for their behalf. Similarly, it is a thanks to his homosexuality that he cheerfully rebuts the point of Symonds's keenness on words who adored the Soviet system and up their asses"—that the second about that period is now quite unavailable. Even more admirable of Symonds's keenness on words lines is his devoted espousal of known writers, his great intellectual nether-worlds, that the great never touch. Who besides Symonds read all that much of Francis Joseph Hegesheimer or James Cabell, let alone Brilleau, Skottowe, Peggy Hopkins, Richard Halliburton or Moncur Marsh? Here's a list of obviously never happen that he's in the library stacks, or among what he calls "the pulp," continually rebukes one's narrower reading. Why hadn't read those 1930s stories of Agatha Chandler when they contain wonderful Chandlerianisms as Symonds reports (in a smart ear in an neighbourhood "sticks out like a nose in a low plane"; the garage of a house is "as easy to drive into as a butte")? Like Edmund Wilson's trips into the resurfered literary one and critically depopulated as Symonds's enthusiasm for less regular books is contagious.

Symonds's greatest distinction as critic—and one shared above all by century by Wilson—is his unyielding affection for literary merit wherever it crops up. It's a critical verity that he rebuts the fixity of canon, when ever sinking into the floodgates of two liberal toteslessness. And Symonds is towards books, so it appears, towards friends. Like most of the authors he chooses to review, the friends he writes about in his essays are not the mightiest of names. But whoever you are, Symonds's friend you have been to an extraordinarily endearing effect. (Naturally, it's a poem by John Symonds that heads the *Now* list in his *Seventeenth Birthday*, recently published by the Symonds Press.) Loyalty is important with Symonds—writes admiringly about Dashiell Hammett for keeping his mouth shut even though it meant falling out with McCarthy nightmare. And then he particularly associates with his own magazine clanliness: he has passed for most of his life. He deliriously over the admirably frank heart written by Hart Crane to the late Waldo Frank and Matthew Williams, a one-time editor of *Twentieth Century Verse* Symonds still grants a pull of the old obligation of associations. Not for him, one's own observe, any Leavisian chiding of comrades.

The lists of affection haven't been closed. The Amherst photo, for instance, with which this collection ends, shows Symonds still extending his friendship. Naturally enough to William F. Pritchard, a fellow member of Wyndham Lewis, who was temporarily Symonds's own in the 1930s, the great student whose poem ("that I liked") Symonds gives as his own readers, and particularly movingly to the blind student John Spratt, doing a thesis on Auden and "the true Auden scholar". A couple of real warmth are as visible in Symonds's human dealings as in his literary ones.

Leavis's "Word on Late Love" (1968), reprinted here, Symonds notes Leavis's shortcomings as a Leavisian, failures of imagination, sympathy, and speltic dogmatism. Among all their other merits, *Critical Observations* are important revelations of the human and returns that can result from a consciously as unlike that as the

Into the pyramid of silence

Harold Beaver

MERTON M. SEALTS, JR.
Pursuing Melville 1940-1980:
Chapters and Essays
419pp. University of Wisconsin Press.
£19.25.
0 299 08870 7

There is a canard still going the rounds that Melville had been wholly forgotten by his countrymen at the time of his death. Even before his death Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*, wrote:

There are more people to-day who believe Herman Melville dead than there are who know he is living. And yet if one chooses to walk along East Eighteenth Street, New York City, any morning about 9 o'clock, he would see the famous writer of sea stories—stories which have never been equaled perhaps in their special line. . . . Busy New York has no idea he is even alive, and one of the best informed literary men in the country laughed recently at my statement that Herman Melville was his neighbor by only two city blocks. "Nonsense," said he. "Why, Melville is dead these many years!" Talk about literary fame? There's a sample of it!

Yet invitations had been extended to Melville ("among the very first") to join the Authors Club, which he declined, just as he rejected the advances of a Canadian professor seeking particulars of his life and "literary methods". His silence had grown pyramidal, like the whale's. He had "become too much of a hermit". In his own words, "his nerves could no longer stand large gatherings". More to the point, he was hard at work on *Billy Budd*.

His death in 1891 created a flurry of renewed interest. Merton M. Sealts Jr wrote in 1974: "The New York Sun, Times, Tribune, and World and the Boston Journal and Evening Transcript carried obituary notices within a day or two of his passing, editorial and extended critical appraisals soon followed, and by the end of December 1891 some thirty notices or longer articles had been printed or reprinted in at least eighteen American newspapers and four magazines." This was not neglect exactly. Yet it remains true that Melville had been largely ignored for a generation and that it needed another two generations for the retrieval of his reputation to become securely based.

Sealts belongs to the second of these two generations, as the years of his pursuit (1940-1980) show. He was infected with enthusiasm for the chase at Yale and never deviated in his allegiance. Two seminar papers written for Stanley Williams, on Emerson and Melville remained the foundation of his life's work. A graduate paper on Melville's "Theory of Knowledge", 1940, was completed by a long essay on "Melville and the Platonic Tradition", 1980, written specifically for the present volume. The consistent, close-hammered grain of his work is remarkable. So is this volume, meticulously vouching, project by project, for every decade.

The ground level is small, but it has never been trivial or dull. Sealts has worked mainly on the task of reconstruction. He has attempted to reconstruct Melville's library (largely dispersed at his death), his lectures (from newspaper reports), his family relationships (from letters and early biographies), his unfinished final project of *Billy Budd*, *Sailor* (from a notorious tricky manuscript). With undue modesty, he acknowledges his affinity to Melville's "Sub-Sub-Library" who supplies the extracts that introduce *Moby-Dick*.

It will be seen that this mere painstaking burrower and grub appears to have gone through the long Valleys and street-stalls of the earth, picking up whatever random allusions to whales he could anywhere find in any book whatsoever, sacred or profane.

It suggests something of the climate of the age in which American literary

studies have been exercised that Sealts has had to defend himself against charges of svoiding interpretation. "All you diligent disciples of Prof. Williams," wrote Henry A. Murray, "have chosen to remain with the fact-collectors, as if literary criticism should be made into a kind of quasi-science."

In retrospect, there have been more than enough interpreters. Every essay in this book is based on exacting research. However small in scope, it made a contribution that has genuinely and permanently advanced the subject. This used to be called scholarship and was the hallmark of the university. Now, on a stage that is crowded with brilliantly gesticulating interpreters and semioticians, such clear-headed and pedestrian-seeming routines apparently need an apology. But there is no need. Professor Sealts's work on Emerson's *Journals* and *Autobiographical Notes*, his edition (with Harrison Hayford) of *Billy Budd*, *Sailor* (1962), his work on the chronology and reception of Melville's shorter fiction, his record of Melville's readings, are all indispensable building-blocks on which any future critical or biographical work must rest.

The 1940s were a fertile decade to have entered American literature. Pioneers, mostly British like Raymond Weaver and D. H. Lawrence, had inaugurated Melville studies. But in 1929 Lewis Mumford's challenging *Herman Melville* had appeared, followed in 1938 by Charles Olson's "Lear and Moby-Dick", followed in 1941 by the magisterial *American Renaissance* by Olson's mentor and teacher at Harvard, F.O. Matthiessen. These were the key years when Melville's grand-daughter Eleanor Melville Melick was still alive, helping the happy few in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Jay Leyda was working on that unique and admirable compendium, *The Melville Lexicon* (1951). Such was the climate of excited and shared discovery which Sealts entered and has helped to sustain. He remained open to every shift of opinion; but the "genetic-historical" approach is now so deeply ingrained that it is applied equally to the cluster of criticism surrounding a

single Melville text ("I and My Chimney") as to the confusions surrounding a long manuscript. Typical is Sealts's lengthy correspondence (1941-1965) with Charles Olson. Both were on the hunt for scattered volumes from Melville's library, with endlessly protested discussions of a never undertaken joint visit to the Bell Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library. Olson was coy and full of hints, scatty with parentheses and italics. Sealts, measured and probing, Olson was consumed by a kind of pseudo-Homeric question. "He is Homer, and I seek to prove it," he asserted in 1949: "the most important creator, the only creator of his particular kind, SINCE HOMER." Melville can open an archaic narrative, the which ain't been done since above-mentioned Greek. Except, oddly enough, for "LANGUAGE": his language is too careless to live! could weep over that/ Whitman less so, the 100 lines must be his limit to the American tragedy in, it was not Melville who had Whitman's diaphragm or ear. It would have helped. Sealts apparently admired such outpourings. The correspondence is both a comic and a moving testimonial to the testy, uncommensurate relationship between a scholar and a poet.

It was the Scottish poet and novelist, Robert Buchanan, back in 1894, who had first called Melville "the one great imaginative writer fit to stand shoulder to shoulder with Whitman". Yet it is precisely that potentially wild and ribald side of Melville of which Sealts is wary. Writing of "I and My Chimney", among whose attributes are doubtless his phallic innuendoes, Sealts remarks:

I would agree that the chimney has certain physiological and sexual connotations, some of which I pointed out long ago, in a footnote. But they scarcely appear cruel to the overall symbolic pattern; the chimney is surely more than a masculine counterpart of the biological imagery in "The Tartarus of Maldis".

Why? Why that "surely"? In a most thorough examination of that tale, this

single Melville text ("I and My Chimney") as to the confusions surrounding a long manuscript.

Typical is Sealts's lengthy correspondence (1941-1965) with Charles Olson. Both were on the hunt for scattered volumes from Melville's library, with endlessly protested discussions of a never undertaken joint visit to the Bell Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library. Olson was coy and full of hints, scatty with parentheses and italics. Sealts, measured and probing, Olson was consumed by a kind of pseudo-Homeric question. "He is Homer, and I seek to prove it," he asserted in 1949: "the most important creator, the only creator of his particular kind, SINCE HOMER." Melville can open an archaic narrative, the which ain't been done since above-mentioned Greek. Except, oddly enough, for "LANGUAGE": his language is too careless to live! could weep over that/ Whitman less so, the 100 lines must be his limit to the American tragedy in, it was not Melville who had Whitman's diaphragm or ear. It would have helped. Sealts apparently admired such outpourings. The correspondence is both a comic and a moving testimonial to the testy, uncommensurate relationship between a scholar and a poet.

It was the Scottish poet and novelist, Robert Buchanan, back in 1894, who had first called Melville "the one great imaginative writer fit to stand shoulder to shoulder with Whitman". Yet it is precisely that potentially wild and ribald side of Melville of which Sealts is wary. Writing of "I and My Chimney", among whose attributes are doubtless his phallic innuendoes, Sealts remarks:

I would agree that the chimney has certain physiological and sexual connotations, some of which I pointed out long ago, in a footnote. But they scarcely appear cruel to the overall symbolic pattern; the chimney is surely more than a masculine counterpart of the biological imagery in "The Tartarus of Maldis".

Why? Why that "surely"? In a most thorough examination of that tale, this

Striving for nationality

Blake Nevius

BENJAMIN LEASE
Anglo-American Encounters: England and the Rise of American Literature
299pp. Cambridge University Press.
£22.50
0 521 23666 5

This is a curious book. It is not at all clear what Benjamin Lease is up to or what audience he has in mind. He has marked out as his terrain the first half of the nineteenth century and proposes to chronicle both the rise of American literature in that period and the series of "Anglo-American encounters" that were, as he puts it, "a significant force in shaping the literary careers" of the ten American writers who made possible "that extraordinary half-century of masterpieces between 1850 and 1885. But whether the distinctive nature of American literature was forged during these decades in the crucible of Anglo-American love-hate encounters" is certainly arguable, especially if the question is engaged on the pleasantly superficial level of this book. What Professor Lease gives us is the context for a study rather than the study itself. He seems always to be lingering in the auto-room of his proper subject. His material is for the most part familiar to students of American literature, though by diligent canvassing of journals and secondary sources he has enhanced the documentation of familiar episodes. But his approach, so far as it can be defined, resembles that of Van Wyck Brooks in his search for a recognizable community of nineteenth-century American writers that would constitute a "usable past" for their descendants. Lease is a more dependable scholar than Brooks, but he has somehow succumbed to the latter's cosy notion

that the community is more important than the writers.

His chapter on Hawthorne is a case in point. The American romancer presents a challenging opportunity (so far largely neglected) to the student of Anglo-American literary relations. No one has adequately explained the miracle of Hawthorne's first book, *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), which at its best is the product of his maturest art. One seeks in vain to reconstitute the intellectual matrix out of which it was formed because no one has been able to provide an adequate account of Hawthorne's reading, largely in British books and journals, during the Salem years. Henry James was the first but not the last admirer of Hawthorne to be misled into overestimating the novelist's provincialism. The influence of Hawthorne's years as United States Consul in Liverpool, especially on his late unfinished romances, has been carefully defined, but one would like to know more, for example, about the reasons for his remarkable popularity in England and the precise nature of his influence on George Eliot. These are questions more challenging, it seems to me, than the rehearsal of biographical twice-told tales.

Instead, what we have in Lease's chapter on Hawthorne is, first of all, the familiar story of the personal crisis of 1849, when after his dismissal from the customs service Hawthorne was plagued by debt and harrowed by the death of his mother, followed by the less familiar but more inconsequential story of John Jay's unsuccessful attempt to interest *Blackwood's* in publishing Hawthorne as a contributor. Since Hawthorne may in fact have been ignorant of Jay's efforts in his behalf, what is one to make of the startling conclusion that "this small encounter with *Blackwood's* takes on importance because it may well have added impetus to Hawthorne's production in the fall and winter of 1849-50, of an 'American classic'.



Abner Pratt house, 170 North Kalomazoo Street, Marshall, 1880, is reproduced from Architecture in Michigan by Wayne Anderson (1981pp. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, Michigan 48202. \$13.95.)

is the one aspect rapidly and uneasily shrugged off. It seems to embarrass the scholar, as maybe Melville in person might have done. Here again the most memorable glimpses we have of him as an old man in the 1880s are relegated to a distant footnote. It is worth retelling. For it reveals a freer, more joyous Melville, on a spree in upstate New York, than the hermit of Twenty-Sixth Street. Ferris Greenslet (writing to Willard Thorp in 1946) recalled that summer of 1880 or 1887 when, as a boy of eleven or twelve, he had listened to "a singularly vital and impressive" man of about seventy who was spinning yarns in a barbershop in Glens Falls. The barber's customer announced that he had driven by buggy "some eight or nine miles in a flat hour".

Clad in a blue double-breasted suit of a seagoing flavor, he was seventy-ish, with a lot of hair and a beard well grizzled, a vigorous body, "plump spicificity", a well tanned countenance, a bright and roving eye, making up a singularly vital and impressive personality. I remember no one that I have met in the fifty odd years since more vividly.

The barber, "having apparently ministered to his patient before", then said to him:

"Tell us some more about those

adventures you had in the South Seas when you were a boy." Whereupon he began a flow of joyous narrative, which I did not identify with Typee until nearly half a century later.

The thing went on better and better until after my own job was finished, and I continued to listen spellbound. The climax came when the barber inquired:

"Weren't there any girls down there?"

"My God!" said the whickerando, "I'll say there were! I went back to the island a couple of years after I left there on board a man-of-war and the first thing I saw when I went ashore was my own little son about a year and a half old running around naked in the sun on the beach."

"How did you know it was your son?" asked the barber.

"He had to be," said the story teller. "He carried his bowsprit to starboard!"

These, I assure you, were his *ipissimo verba*. On the surface of him at least there was every indication of a central *joie de vivre*, which is not without interest considering that just at that time he must have been writing, or at any rate thinking about, *Billy Budd*.

England, her friendship with Lady Byron, and the juicy revelations of *Lady Byron Undicled*. The same may be said of the history of Emerson's friendships with Carlyle and John Sterling, which is shrewd and circumstantial, though one is left with the question why the most important product of Emerson's British experience, *English Traits*, is never discussed.

It seems to me that the difficulties to come are foreshadowed in the Preface, when we are confronted with a series of incompatible statements. Lease announces that his concern has been "less with the nature of nationality in American literature than with a better understanding of our most important early writers". On the other hand, Part One of his book ("Forays") proposes to treat six American novelists "in their strivings toward a distinctively 'American voice'" and Part Two ("Forays and Friendships") will describe "the campaigns of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman for cultural independence". If these last two aims do not concern "the nature of nationality in American literature", what do they concern?

At any rate, this confusing diversity of interests may help explain why the compass of Professor Lease's attention swings so widely—why, for example, we are often reminded of such purely intranational "encounters" as John Neal's early recognition of Hawthorne, William Carlos Williams's estimate of Poe, Irving's writings on the American West, and the various feuds and liaisons between Cooper and Irving, Cooper and Twain, Hawthorne and Irving. Perhaps one's disappointment would not be so keen if the whole subject of Anglo-American relations in the realm of literature and the arts during the first half of the nineteenth century, a subject unparalleled in the opportunity it still has to offer, were not so date so thinly cultivated.

Bible schoolmen

Marjorie Chibnall

Beryl Smalley

Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning: From Abelard to Wyclif
430pp. Hambledon Press, 35
Cloucester Avenue, London NW1.
£25.
0 9506882 6 6

When Beryl Smalley published her *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* over forty years ago she opened up the subject for the first time to non-specialists. It was a formidable undertaking. The Bible was "the most-studied book of the middle ages", yet thousands of manuscripts of medieval commentaries and glosses remained unprinted and inadequately catalogued. A long line of scholars from Denifle to Wilmart had investigated individual problems, but general histories still occasionally dismissed the whole period as one of obscurity and decadence, and no one had attempted to popularize the subject. Beryl Smalley's achievement was to place it firmly in the lecture-rooms of universities for serious study as a vital part of the history of medieval culture.

She was the first to recognize that much in her book would need to be expanded and modified. A second edition followed, and two further books were completed. One investigated the lively and idiosyncratic use of classical traditions by a group of fourteenth-century friars; a second showed theologians related their studies to contemporary problems of church and state during the Becket controversy. In addition she produced a series of papers on individual commentators and preachers, which were, in her own words, satellites of the three books, both prefaces and postscripts. They are here brought together in accessible form.

Abelard and Wyclif are each represented only by a single short paper; but they mark roughly the chronological extent of the studies from the early twelfth to the late fourteenth century and, more significantly, two great cultural changes. Abelard's "first key to wisdom" was a continual questioning. Commenting on an authoritative text from St Augustine, illustrated with a remark of Boethius on Aristotle, he combined an apparent reverence for accepted authority with originality in treatment. Rhetoric and dialectic, pressed into the service of philosophy, became the framework of early scholasticism. Wyclif also appealed to the past, and also innovated, but no longer in a rational, scholastic way. His writing, taking the form of spiritual commentary, was a complete break both with the pre-Abelardian tradition of monastic piety (which had continued in some biblical commentaries throughout the whole period) and with scholastic theology. Whatever his future influence might be, his interpretation of biblical texts was arbitrary and tendentious in a way that was wholly new.

One consequence of the development of scholastic thought was the separation of theology from exegesis. Most of these papers are concerned with the latter. Many of the masters studied were traditional in outlook. But even the most conservative were ready to explore new ways of explaining Scripture, and a few asked questions picked up from philosophers and canonists. If most of their commentaries and sermons were intended for the learned, they sometimes caught echoes of political controversies outside the lecture room.

Varying modes of thought appear in a central problem of exegesis: the interpretation of the Old Testament legal books. Patristic writings had stressed the spiritual sense of these books; twelfth-century scholars focused more on the literal sense. Following the example of Jerome they revived the practice of questioning Jewish rabbis about their customs: why, for example, should you boil a kid in the milk of its dam? It was no longer enough to point to a hidden spiritual meaning, awaiting revelation. Commentators with a new sense of

history tried to explain how the Mosaic code was viable in its own time. The explanation might be hygienic, since eating immature meat boiled in milk was unhealthy; or moral, since showing pity to animals might encourage compassion towards men; or disciplinary, intended to inculcate unquestioning obedience. Some exegetes, like the Benedictine monk Ralph of Flais, still stressed the spiritual sense. He undertook to write a commentary on Leviticus in order to convince his puzzled brethren that Jewish arguments for the permanence of the whole Mosaic law were untenable. To him some precepts had no literal sense; but he drew out the three spiritual senses – allegorical, moral and anagogical – subtly and persuasively. His work remained popular throughout the thirteenth century, and was read in schools and cloisters alike.

William of Auvergne went to the other extreme, and argued that some precepts had no hidden spiritual meaning; Christians no longer needed them when they had the Gospels. Yet to him and his contemporaries the Old Law was a subject of serious study; the twelfth-century search for a "Hebrew truth" was reinforced by the need to refute Cathar heretics, who rejected the Old Testament altogether. William had a historian's curiosity and imagination, combined with some philosophical training; he believed that the outward observance imposed on the Jews must have echoed the precepts of the law of nature, and have measured up to the standards set by Isidore for good human laws. "But he went too far in his reaction against allegory. Most later commentators by-passed him, or refuted him by stressing the literal sense of Scripture, widened to include verbal simile, metaphor, parable and symbolic action. Aquinas summed up the development and gave the best definition: the literal sense included all that the writers meant to express, the spiritual sense depended on the intention of God, and could be made plain by later revelation. He applied his theory of causality: divine and human laws could be explained by the end to which they were directed.

In the main these *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning* are concerned with masters less well known than the Angelic Doctor, but interesting in their diversity. They include the Franciscan John Russel, writing in the 1290s, and William of Nottingham II, the exponent of Clement of Llanthony's popular gospel harmony. Both belonged to the older tradition that concentrated on *lectio divina* and made no use of natural science or observation of the contemporary world. Some preachers, to the University of Oxford were equally moderate and conservative; their learned sermons, hardly addressed to the universities. Others had more political and philosophical interests. John of Beconthorpe, best known as canonist, made great use of canon law in his scriptural commentaries. He was deeply concerned with contemporary issues: a "little man" who heartily supported Pope John XXII, wholeheartedly, "he put a punch into exegesis," but he was murdered, remembered for his dispute with Petrarch on the Avignon papacy, was also a biblical commentator, but not an inflammatory one. A Thomist, with a taste for history, he admired Abelard and Gilbert de Porée as founders of scholastic theology, but avoided direct political comment, apart from complaining that few prelates of his day would follow Thomas of Canterbury in braving death for ecclesiastical freedom.

These are scholarly papers, giving detailed descriptions of manuscripts and lengthy citations. But they are short, and written with vivid comments on the meaning for individuals of particular points in theology and exegesis. Like Melancthon, who brought to life the technicalities of legal procedure through the men and women involved in particular cases, Beryl Smalley illuminates medieval exegesis by looking into the ideas, perplexities and achievements of individual masters. No one reading this book could doubt the richness and diversity of medieval studies of the Bible.

Between Alfonsos

R. A. Fletcher

Bernard F. Reilly

The Kingdom of León-Castilla under Queen Urraca, 1109-1126
401pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £23.
0 691 05344 8

Urraca was the earliest of a trio of women who attempted to rule as queens in their own right in the male-dominated world of twelfth-century feudalism. Matilda hardly got a look in as queen of England against the usurper Stephen; Queen Melisenda of Jerusalem did not get much of a run for her money; but Urraca sat on the throne of León-Castilla for nearly seventeen eventful years. This period has traditionally been portrayed as one of unmitigated disaster – civil war, external aggression, governmental incompetence, social unrest, economic disruption; an unhappy interlude, about which the less said the better, between the glorious reigns of Alfonso VI (1065-1109) and Alfonso VII (1126-1157). This is partly because the principal contemporary chronicler, Gerald of Beauvais, writing in the *Historia Compostellana* – and reflecting the views of his master, the great archbishop Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela – both detested the queen and indulged to the full in what Gibbon unforgottably called "the natural pessimism of sacred oratory." And it is partly owing to the prejudices of the romantic, nationalist, Castilian historiography of the nineteenth century, which, since the failure of Urraca's marriage to the king of Aragón ruled out her playing Isabella to his Ferdinand, and "postponed" the political unification of the Iberian peninsula for four centuries.

Bernard F. Reilly's terse though remarkably good-tempered dismissal of such rubbish is not the least of the virtues of his book. Here for the first time we have a thorough, critical, balanced and impartial account of Urraca's reign: who mattered, how things worked and what happened when. The chapters of narrative which make up the first half of the book are

the most ambitious, in the sense that the sources for the reign of Urraca are not of such a kind as to encourage this sort of treatment. Contemporary chroniclers are exceedingly few, and only incidentally concerned with the queen's doings. So the historian is flung back on to the evidence of royal and other charters. Urraca's charters have never been systematically edited; Reilly's footnotes now provide the best available guide to them. But charters – even when dated, like Spanish ones, and often containing such useful incidental information – are notoriously slippery materials with which to reconstruct political narrative. Some of Reilly's assumptions in exploiting this evidence, and some of the detailed conclusions which he draws from it, are open to question; but this is bound to be so in any pioneering study of this kind.

The second half of the book deals analytically with the institutions of government and the people who ran them. Thus, Reilly surveys the royal court and household, the chancery, the bishops, local officials such as counts, castellans and *merinos*, college and taxation, military and judicial arrangements, the administration of towns. Apart from a few dazzling glimpses of the obvious – as when he assures us on p. 309 that the queen's policies "were designed to make royal governance effective within pragmatic parameters and to increase its local effectiveness when the chance offered" – there is much of great interest that emerges from this process of careful sifting of widely scattered and little-known materials.

The traditional Urraca, largely derived from Gerald of Beauvais, was by turns capricious and vindictive, cruel and indecisive. Under Reilly's skilful treatment a different and far more credible ruler begins to take shape: tenacious, resourceful and shrewd, capable of decisive action, a worthy successor to (and with a harder task than) the father, Alfonso VI, to whose memory she seems to have been so devoted. But the emphasis has to be on "begins." This book reminds one yet again that the historian of twelfth-century Spain labours under severe handicaps in comparison with, say, the historian of

England at the same period. At points, of course, Urraca has left us charters to Henry I's 1100-odd, but no abundance of contemporary records, no *Constitutio Domus Regie*, no *Roll*, no *Regesta Regum Anglorum*, no *Normannorum*. He can draw on the tradition of local historical scholarship for the great antiquaries of the seventeenth-century Spain, but no worthy successors. We are short, going to know all that we can about Queen Urraca or her documents will emerge as Spanish even perils catalogued. However, the discovery of the lost works of the Orderic Vitalis, these are not likely to be either numerous or different from what we have already, in other words, Reilly's Urraca is likely to come the field for a long time to come.

Could it be bettered? On its terms probably not (though the writer could have been improved here and there). It is a heroic achievement to have broken away from the credulous mythology which under Spanish dispensation has for so long been allowed to stand for the history of Urraca's reign. I suspect that an understanding of Spanish history in this and many other periods will be most fruitfully advanced when we begin to forget the Pyrenees. We might better place to understand the kingdom if we came to it from Siles Germany or Anglo-Norman Spain or Capetian France or Norman Sicily. This was first pointed out, to my knowledge, by Stubbs, over a century ago. But no one paid him much attention (though he did, interestingly enough, have a few disciples in Spain, precisely because of the tyranny of the idea of "Iberian state"). This book's reflection that past misunderstandings of Queen Urraca arose from the treatment of her by the traditional historians who seemed to her of impeding progress towards the consensus has, I think, been triumphantly refuted. It is a pity that Spain is one country less responsible for most of the ill that have befallen that unhappy land for almost five centuries or so. But that is another story.

Signs of improvement

Nicholas Phillipson

R. H. CAMPBELL and A. S. SKINNER (Editors)

The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment
231pp. Edinburgh: John Donald.
£15.
0 86976 076 6

R. H. CAMPBELL and A. S. SKINNER

231pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.
0 7099 0729 X

The term "Scottish Enlightenment" is fairly new but the game of interpreting the remarkable intellectual history of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Scotland is not. Victorian evangelicals saw polite Scottish learning as a new, brilliant and perverse materialism which threatened to corrupt manners, morals and religion and encourage the spread of scepticism, metaphysical anxiety and unhappiness. Cultural patriots, preoccupied with the anglicization of their national culture, have preferred to think of Scottish intellectual achievement in terms of a creative tension between English and Scottish culture. Historians of the social sciences, Marxist and non-Marxist alike, have explored Scottish moral philosophy and history for evidence of the roots of the modern social sciences. Finally, and with awesome prolixity, liberal American academics have ransacked the lives and works of the Scottish literati in order to lay bare the flesh of a humane, liberal and innovative culture conducted by cheerful, moderate men who were equally at home in the worlds of affairs and learning.

The trouble is that so much of this interest in the Scottish Enlightenment has had ideological roots. Evangelicals wanted stocks with which to beat moderate presbyterians. Cultural patriots want to resolve the cultural

dilemmas of their own age. Historians of the social sciences have looked for means of legitimizing their own disciplines. Liberal Americans at war with academic over-specialization want to assert the relevance of humane learning to modern life. The result has been to complicate the problem of writing an intelligible, objective history of the Scottish Enlightenment, for each ideological interest has generated its own system of scholarship, designed to make ideological rather than historical sense of a remarkable event in the cultural history of the West.

One wonders what it takes to break such historiographical moulds and it is for this reason that a book called *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* sounds so appealing. Unfortunately this one is most disappointing. It is a collection of twelve essays by different authors who, for the most part, skirt round problems of definition and interpretation. The design of the book is open to question. Two otherwise admirable essays on the management of the Scottish economy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries by R. H. Campbell and T. M. Devine throw no light whatsoever on intellectual discourse or on the circumstances in which it was conducted. The essays on university reform are uninformative and superficial. Essays which discuss the attitudes of the Kirk to intellectual debate and discuss the progress of Scottish jurisprudence are thin and reworded. The essays by T. D. Campbell's useful discussion of Hutcheson's moral epistemology and its implications for his political theory, S. R. Sutherland's careful and curious discussion of possible seventeenth-century Presbyterian points of reference for Hume's interest in natural theology, and K. Haakonssen's useful summary of his views about Smith's natural jurisprudence belong in specialist journals, not in a book with a title such as this.

The design and execution of the book suggest that the editors and contributors felt uneasy about giving serious thought to the problem of

defining the Scottish enlightenment. What definitions there are are minimal, generalized and unsystematic. Some authors seem to think of the Scottish enlightenment simply in terms of some sort of "spirit of improvement" which was at work in Scottish society at last and demonstrates, incidentally, that Scotland was not as "backward" as Hugh Trevor-Roper thinks. Others simply hide behind the age-old belief that the enlightenment has something to do with a tension between religious orthodoxy, rooted in faith or reason, and an understanding of human nature rooted in experience and sentiment, a truism which is meaningless unless it is examined with care and precision. Only Arthur Donovan and Duncan Forbes show any disposition to analyse the language, scientific and philosophical investigation, and to carefully summarize its importance in the context of the evolution of the Scottish enquiry into the principles of chemistry, Forbes by means of a pungent, original and committed essay on natural law and the Scottish enlightenment.

This essay deserves serious attention. Forbes suggests that the Scottish investigation into what Hume called "the Science of Man" is best seen in the context of a radical Scottish attempt to reconstruct the entire fabric of the natural jurisprudence of Grotius and Pufendorf which played so vital a part in shaping contemporary ideas about morality, justice and religion. Hume comes over as the great innovator who developed "a wholly secular and one-dimensional theory of justice" to replace the rationalist edifice and the system of natural law which it rested. It was on these foundations that Kames, Smith and Millar set out to construct a new system of natural jurisprudence, developing in the process the system of psychology, sociology and history for which the Scots have become so famous. But the great project was never completed. Indeed the whole exercise was shortly discredited by Dugald Stewart on the grounds that it was dangerous to morals, religion and good government. Nevertheless, what

matters, says Forbes, is "the glimpse of possible new and sounder foundations for something regarded all throughout the history of western civilization, as essential to decent living." Forbes's discussion is inevitably schematic and selective – what, one wonders, will he make of the literati's parallel and consuming interest in ideas of duty and virtue which are expressed in the language of civic humanism? But his essay is exactly the sort of investigation that is needed if we are ever to have a properly historical account of the origins and nature of the Scottish enlightenment.

Campbell and Skinner's second volume, an introduction to the life and works of Adam Smith, is very much more welcome. It is lucid, superbly well informed and written with the assurance and authority one expects of two scholars who have done so much to shape Smith scholarship in recent years. The biographical chapters are particularly good and will be of interest to scholars as well as to the laymen for whom the book is intended.

Smith is a notoriously difficult biographical subject. He was a poor correspondent and made things worse by having his papers burned after his death. A common but tiresome characteristic of a Scottish literatus, Campbell and Skinner have done wonders with what the left – particularly in their treatment of his early years and his professional career at Glasgow. In the process they manage to establish the important critical point that Smith's account of the dynamics of economic growth in a commercial economy could not possibly be a simple extrapolation of the history of the remarkable economic expansion of Glasgow. For Glasgow's success depended, in the last resort, upon its merchants exploiting the trading restrictions built into the mercantilist system which Smith so passionately denounced. The art of biography is governed by a harsh law which says that the less you understand the subject in which your hero lives, the more overloaded with unneeded detail your narrative

will be. It is a law that has taken a heavy toll of biographies of the Scottish literati in recent years. It requires scholarship and understanding of a high order to be able to write with the brevity and calmity Campbell and Skinner show in these chapters.

The chapters on Smith's writings come off less well. Like the others, they are aimed at those who are likely to know something about Smith's economic theory – or what passes for it in modern text-books – and want to know something about his other writings. The authors certainly succeed in demonstrating his remarkable intellectual range in the sense that they provide fairly comprehensive summaries of his ideas about the principles of rhetoric, morality, justice and scientific discovery, as well as political economy. But these chapters are curiously heavy going and seem to be uncomfortably static by contrast with the easy narrative flow of the biographical chapters. The reason is that the authors have tackled his writings work by work, summarizing his conclusions in a language which may be familiar to us but was not so to Smith. This take-it-or-leave-it discussion has the effect of fragmenting Smith's thought and gives little idea of the evolution of his distinctive style of thinking about the Science of Man.

In his splendid essay in *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, discussed earlier, Duncan Forbes suggests Smith's thought ought to be seen in the context of a heroic, Humean attempt to construct a new system of natural jurisprudence. Such a suggestion, pregnant though it may be, would be too speculative at the moment for Campbell and Skinner and out of place in a book designed for laymen. Nevertheless, an account of his thinking which tried to see its architecture on its own terms rather than ours would surely be the most effective possible way to make economic enthusiasts who insist on taking Smith's name in vain think carefully about what he was really saying.

Visions of conformity

Gordon Donaldson

George R. Hewitt

Scotland under Morton 1572-80
232pp. Edinburgh: John Donald.
£14.
0 85976 0774

The standing of James Douglas, Earl of Morton, among the aristocratic leaders of the Scottish Reformation has had to compete with that of James Stewart, Earl of Moray, to whom as an adventurous glamour attaches as half-brother of Mary, Queen of Scots. But Morton ruled Scotland for only two and a half years, whereas Morton held undisputed sway for six and gave the country its longest spell of stable government for a generation.

George R. Hewitt, in the first full-length study of the subject, deals in three chronological chapters with the end of the war between the supporters of Queen Mary and those of her son and with Morton's treatment of his former enemies as well as to detect the sometimes left to the reader to detect the people who entered the scene and performed their religious function within the community.

Finally, I must praise the excellent maps and tables, the useful bibliography and the existence of a paperback edition that is pleasant to handle and to read, and comparatively cheap.

Of the five topical chapters on home and foreign policy, the two on the church seem the best. Hewitt continues through the 1570s the kind of analysis done by others for earlier years and

demonstrates how the restoration of a measure of lay control over ecclesiastical finance rescued it from the mess into which it had been plunged by so experiment in clerical control. Morton died up many loose ends left over since the Reformation and criticism of him is shown to have been largely unjust. But in 1574 Andrew Melville came on the scene with his "concepts and overseas dreams" to challenge Morton's vision of "conformity with England", and issues were soon raised which were not finally laid to rest until the 1920s.

In the chapters on domestic administration many questions are left unanswered. We learn a lot about finance, but it is not easy to disentangle the transactions of the man James Douglas from those of his government. The arrangements for gold-mining almost suggest what would now be called a mixed economy. A hint that the regent was "bypassing the treasury" and luring his own pocket into elaborate, especially in relation to the silence of official record about the compositions normally paid for gifts under the privy seal. We hear too much about the border wardens and their salaries and too little about the machinery for enforcing order. Morton's institution of a border police force of infantry and cavalry looks like the device for which James VI has usually been given the credit.

Contemporary official opinion was that under Morton the land enjoyed "a reasonable quietness and rest" and with that qualified compliment Hewitt would probably agree. Apart from Aberdeen and the Borders, the outlying parts of the country did not feel the regent's hand, and the West Highlands, which hardly figure in the story at all, may have been dismissed as ungovernable. Morton, who held office until he was over sixty, was older than any ruler of Scotland had been for generations, and seemed with time to have lost his resolution. He might declare that there would never be

peace until half a dozen of Melville's followers had been hanged or banished, but all he did was to procrastinate. The impression grows that he was at the best feared rather than loved and that latterly he was not even feared.

The book should have been called "Morton's government of Scotland", for it gives a picture of the life of the nation. Hewitt has no time for industrial developments except when legislation dealt with "mere" economic matters, and he ignores the nine-tenths of the people who lived in the countryside and surely benefited by "a reasonable quietness" (and also, some think, by better weather).

On Morton's character there are only tantalizing references to conflicting qualities of "crafty caution", irresolution, ostentation, "a morbid sense of humour", and harshness. It is credible that lack of tact did more than sound policies to create the enemies who blackened his memory. Not enough is made of Morton's anglophile leanings, which, partly inherited and partly reinforced by two periods of residence in England as well as some shorter visits, may have made the man as anglicized as John Knox.

The book is sometimes laboured and repetitive. Information is given in the narrative chapters which could have been deployed with effect elsewhere, individuals and incidents make their appearance without introduction or explanation and sometimes without mention in the index (where the Fleming Peterson appears as a mention of the belief that the great Rubie (de Roubaix) had yet, surely the allusion was to De Roubaix, who was keeper of the seal under Mary of Guise. And does the author mean to what he writes that "the third Earl of Morton enjoyed indifferent health"?

Fruits of opportunism

Caroline Bingham

Ronald McNair Scott

Robert the Bruce: King of Scots
254pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
0 09 149630 6

On a stormy night of March 1286 the young ruler Alexander III, King of Scots, stumbled on a cliff path and hurled him to his death. In 1375 John Barbour began the narrative of his epic poem *The Brus* with the lines (translated here by A. A. H. Douglas):
When good King Alexander died,
That Scotland had as leader and guide,
Six years and more the country lay
In desolation after his day:
Until at last the barons went
To an assembly with intent
To choose a king.

There were thirteen claimants – apply named "Competitors" – to the throne of Scotland, and Edward I of England, erstwhile brother-in-law of Alexander III, was invited to act as arbitrator. Through the enmeshing of politics and war Ronald McNair Scott leads the reader with a clear thread of narrative. He explains the steps by which Edward I, with the conquest of Scotland as his objective, exploited his advantage, moving from the position of apparently impartial arbitrator to that of arbiter of the fate of Scotland. Edward demanded that the Competitors acknowledge him their feudal overlord, and having secured this position, made a scrupulously fair decision in favour of the weak-willed John Balliol. He then demanded that Balliol pay him homage for the Kingdom of Scotland, and secured this demand – too. Thereafter, by manipulating feudal law to make Balliol's situation intolerably humiliating, he drove Scotland to revolt, so that his war of conquest could be represented as lawful suppression of rebellion. He met resistance far surpassing his expectations.

The *Parti-Coloured Mind* Prose relating to the Conflict of Church and State in Seventeenth Century Scotland, edited by David Reid, has been published (221pp. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press. £7.50. 0 973 0304 4).

Scott narrates these preliminaries in some detail in order to explain the emergence of Robert the Bruce (grandson of a strong unsuccessful Competitor) as the Patriot King. Bruce, after a couple of changes of heart, became the leader of Scottish resistance in succession to William Wallace. Bruce was crowned as Robert I on March 25, 1306, in such desperate circumstances that he was no more than a crowned fugitive. He was fortunate in the death of Edward I in 1307, for Edward II was a far less formidable enemy. Nonetheless, Edward II had able generals, notably Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, by whom the vast resources of England were efficiently deployed against the resurgent Scotland. But Robert I's astonishing victory at Bannockburn in 1314 was the turning point of the war. The "Treaty of Edinburgh" (or Northampton) of 1328 – by which he won English recognition of Scotland's independence and his own kingship, the year before his death – was its triumphant conclusion.

Scott describes Bruce's progression from aristocratic opportunist to Patriot King convincingly, but with only a little charitable criticism of the vacillations of his early career. His portrayal of the King's character is respectful and admiring, though too encomiastic to achieve much light and shade. *Robert the Bruce* is biographical history rather than the portrait of a man; and historical biography needs to be both. However, as biographical history for the general reader – to whom it is addressed – it succeeds; for the reader with no previous knowledge of the period will find this book perfectly comprehensible. Scott possesses the most excellent gift of clarity.

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